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BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING FAMILY HISTORY MAGAZINE

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?®

GENEALOGY WEBSITES

How do Ancestry, Findmypast, MyHeritage and TheGenealogist compare? Find out inside…

TESTED

HISTORIC PHOTOS ONLINE Discover images of your street, your house and even your ancestors

My great grandfather ran a dodgy dating agency

COPYING FAMILY TREES Can you trust other people's research?

20TH-CENTURY RECORDS Find your family in the early 1900s

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- A history of voting
- Trace your Shropshire roots
- A Welsh visitors' book

This was Sylvia's promise to you...

A generation ago, a woman named Sylvia made a promise. As a doctor's secretary, she'd watched stroke destroy the lives of so many people. She was determined to make sure we could all live in a world where we're far less likely to lose our lives to stroke.

She kept her promise, and a gift to the Stroke Association was included in her Will. Sylvia's gift helped fund the work that made sure many more of us survive stroke now than did in her lifetime.

Sylvia changed the story for us all. Now it's our turn to change the story for those who'll come after us.

Stroke still shatters lives and tears families apart. And for so many survivors the road to recovery is still long and desperately lonely. If you or someone you love has been affected by stroke – you'll know just what that means.

But it doesn't have to be like this. You can change the story, just like Sylvia did, with a gift in your Will. All it takes is a promise.

You can promise future generations a world where researchers discover new treatments and surgeries and every single stroke survivor has the best care, rehabilitation and support network possible, to help them rebuild their lives.

Big or small, every legacy gift left to the Stroke Association will make a difference to stroke survivors and their families.

Find out how by calling 020 7566 1505

or email legacy@stroke.org.uk

or visit stroke.org.uk/legacy

Rebuilding lives after stroke

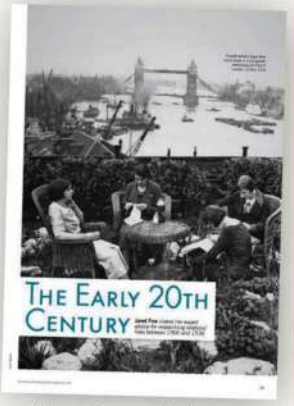
The Stroke Association is registered as a charity in England and Wales (No 211015) and in Scotland (SC037789).
Also registered in the Isle of Man (No. 945) and Jersey (NPO 369), and operating as a charity in Northern Ireland.

Stroke Association

Welcome

Sarah's Top Tip

Use the 1911 enumerators' books to pinpoint relatives' rural addresses



By 1911, most people were living in towns and cities with clear addresses. However, in rural areas your family might be recorded in the census as living in a house called 'Bank Cottage' with no indication as to which house in the village it was. In her article about early 20th-century records on **page 29** Janet Few highlights how useful the 1911 enumerators' books are in this situation. They enable you to easily work out the enumerator's route without having to scroll through dozens of records.

One of the many perks of my job is that I have a subscription to all four of the main genealogy providers Ancestry, Findmypast, MyHeritage and TheGenealogist – and I honestly wouldn't want to be without any of them. However, subscribing to all four websites is expensive, and it's a luxury that most people can't justify. We gave five volunteers from our Facebook Group two months to play around with all four websites. Turn to **page 14** to read their verdict. I hope we inspire you to try some new options yourself.

One of the resources offered by genealogy subscription websites is the family trees created by their members. These can offer useful clues, but on **page 20** Chloe O'Shea points out how and why they can lead you down the wrong track.

Also this month we look at records from the early 20th century (**page 29**) and Post Office pension records (**page 38**), and share a brief overview of some of the websites out there that can help you find photographs of your village, your street and even perhaps your ancestors (**page 35**). I will certainly be checking out some of those.

Finally, I loved the article about Greta Nicholls' dodgy ancestor (**page 58**). If you have any tales of your more colourful relations that you would like to share with others, do please write in. We are all ears!

Sarah

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Contributors

Nick Peers
Nick writes our 'Tech Tips' each month, but this issue he has worked with a panel of readers to compare the four main subscription websites. See what they thought on **page 14**.

Susannah Coster
Susannah is an archivist at The Postal Museum, and shares advice for getting the most out of the newly digitised Post Office pension records on Ancestry on **page 38**.

Felicity Day
Felicity is a journalist who writes about British history and heritage, especially the Regency period. On **page 54** she heads to the polling booth to explore the history of elections.

COVER IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES/A PILE OF OLD BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

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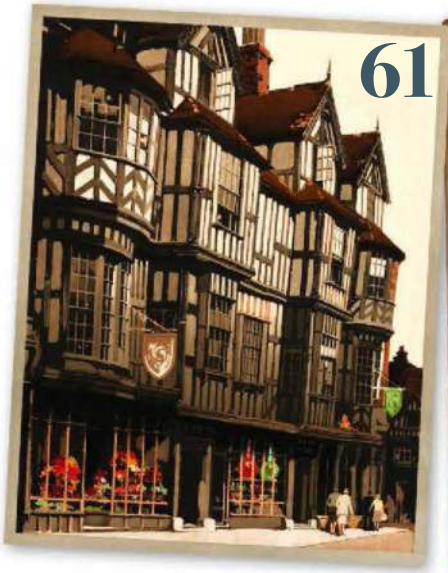

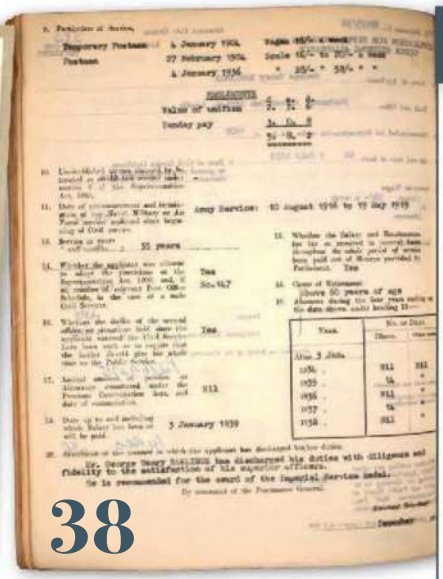

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WIN an AncestryDNA test kit from **ancestry.co.uk** **WORTH £79**

The writer of our star letter wins an AncestryDNA test **worth £79** – so drop us a line and share your thoughts with us.

Ill-Fated Connection

STAR LETTER

I was fascinated by Claire Vaughan's 'Reader Story' in the March issue about Angus Wardlaw's relation Francis RM Crozier, and the ill-fated journey of the *Erebus* and *Terror* in search of the Northwest Passage. Through an article by Gillian Rickard in the journal of Kent Family History Society (**kfhs.org.uk**), I discovered that James Frederick Elgar Rigden had served as captain's coxswain on board the *Erebus*. As the manager of the Rigden One Name Study (**one-name.org/name_profile/rigden**), I had to dig deeper.

Gillian had already identified that James was the son of John Rigden and Frances Rebecca Capp and the grandson of William Rigden and Ann Elgar, who married at Great Mongeham in Kent on 20 October 1760. Since I am also descended from Rigdens of Great Mongeham, I was hoping to find a link.

James served on the *Erebus* from 1839 or earlier (The National Archives, ADM 27/66/84 ff 234–235), and took part in Ross' Antarctic Expedition. He married Caroline New in Portsea on 8 March 1845, just two months before *Erebus'* final voyage.

Sadly, Caroline died in the poorhouse in 1853, aged just 27. But, rather surprisingly, she did leave a will, proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, leaving everything to her sister, Elizabeth Barker. In the 1851 census she had described herself as a "sailor's wife", so seems to have been holding out hope that James would return. But when she wrote her will, she acknowledged that she was a widow.

Although James and Caroline had no children, his name lived on, because his brother John named his first-born son James Frederick Elgar Rigden.

For anyone else searching for *Erebus* or *Terror* men, there is a range of great resources available online:

The National Archives' series ADM 27 can be searched by surname and ship via the archive's online catalogue Discovery: **discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**.

Erebus and *Terror* in 1841 – Wendy is linked by marriage to James Frederick Elgar Rigden

Royal Museums Greenwich has a painting by Belgian marine artist François-Étienne Musin depicting *Erebus* in the ice that can be seen at **rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-14798**, an image of its memorial plaque listing all the names of the officers and crew at **rmg.co.uk/stories/blog/library-archive/memorial-men-hms-erebus-terror-library-item-month** and a great blog at **rmg.co.uk/stories/blog/curatorial/hms-terror-sir-john-franklins-final-expedition**.

The Imperial War Museum has some good images of the Westminster memorial statue and plinth, listing crew names, at **iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/63361**.

Ancestry has details of the Arctic medal awards at **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1687**.

Although James, like most of the *Erebus* and *Terror* men, has no known grave, he is commemorated on the site Find a Grave: **findagrave.com/memorial/242793151/james-frederick_elgar-rigden**.

I would also recommend Michael Palin's book *Erebus: The Story of a Ship* (Random House, 2018), which gives a very full and readable account.

So, am I related to James? Well, perhaps not in the way I expected. He was the first cousin four times removed of the wife of my second cousin, three times removed! Or, at least, that is what I know so far. I still have the descendants of James' brother to explore, and who knows what I might find.

And I'd love to hear from any other Rigdens who might have links to James.

Wendy Tait, by email

Editor Replies Thank you for sharing this Wendy, especially all the useful resources for other readers with a connection or interest in this fateful expedition.

GETTY IMAGES

Michael emailed us to share his own connection to Angus' famous relation

Crozier Link

I read the March 'Reader Story' by Claire Vaughan regarding Angus Wardlaw's relation Francis Crozier with interest.

A couple of years ago I had a similar experience when researching my maternal ancestors in a Dublin cemetery. I came across the name Emily Constance Crozier on a headstone, married to Edward Dillon. Her father was Edward Crozier, son of George and brother to Francis RM Crozier.

Since then I have read a number of excellent books about Crozier and Franklin. Wider study of the Crozier family indicates significant contributions as members of the military, the Church and the Judiciary.

Michael Grant, Scotter, Lincolnshire

Editor Replies **I'm glad you enjoyed the article. The Croziers were clearly a very interesting family!**

Averil vividly remembers the impact of German bombing raids on the city of Nottingham – this photograph dates from 1941

Home-Front Memories

Like your correspondent Terry Stephens (April), I, too, was intrigued to know that Alan Crosby has no living relatives who remember the Second World War ('Off the Record', February). I was born in 1936 and remember playing on our swing in the garden of our home in Chingford, Essex, in September 1939. I went into the house to find all the grown-ups sitting in a solemn circle. They all 'shushed' me, because the prime minister was about to announce that war had been declared. I have heard recordings of that speech many times, so feel as though I can actually remember it.

My mother took my sister, brother and me to our holiday bungalow at Jaywick Sands for the first winter of the war, because the police were asking everyone with children to get out of London to be safe; but, since we could hear the noise of the bombs from over the Channel, I wonder how safe it was. My father was a master tailor, working in a reserved occupation, so he used to ride his bike to Jaywick each weekend.

In 1940 my father obtained a similar position at a firm in London called Rego who made military uniforms, and he was asked to design a siren suit for Winston Churchill. So he had the prototype made to fit me. I remember it being lovely and warm in the snowy winter. It must have been the first onesie!

Later that year we moved to Nottingham where my father was in the real Dad's Army, and used to come in to check on us as he went on his rounds. One night he came in and said, "Come and look at Nottingham on fire!" Boots' factory and the Co-op bakery had both been hit, with many fatalities.

I started school, aged nearly five, at George Road Infants School and couldn't understand why everyone laughed when I said I was "a Mixed Infant" – it said so on the board outside school. Leslie Crowther, the TV presenter of *Crackerjack* fame, was also a Mixed Infant who lived in Nottingham, and I feel like I remember him.

Later in the war my father went to work at the munitions factory at Chilwell, and he was also sent to a chocolate factory at York to deliver a lecture about ▶

Paula Jones messaged us regarding an article on our website about dance halls: tinyurl.com/wdytya-halls
My grandmother's cousin was the leader of a jazz band named Leo Boots' Manhattan Dance Band. She would sometimes sing with them when they played locally.

GETTY IMAGES

organisations and methods. My mother and I went with him. We were there for VE Day.

I also remember going to a mass burial at West Bridgford after a bombing raid on Nottingham. I don't remember it with horror, just wonderful flowers, sunshine and birdsong.

Our wonderful parents were able to give us a happy childhood despite the horrors going on around us, for which I am eternally grateful.

Averil Turner, Bacup, Lancashire

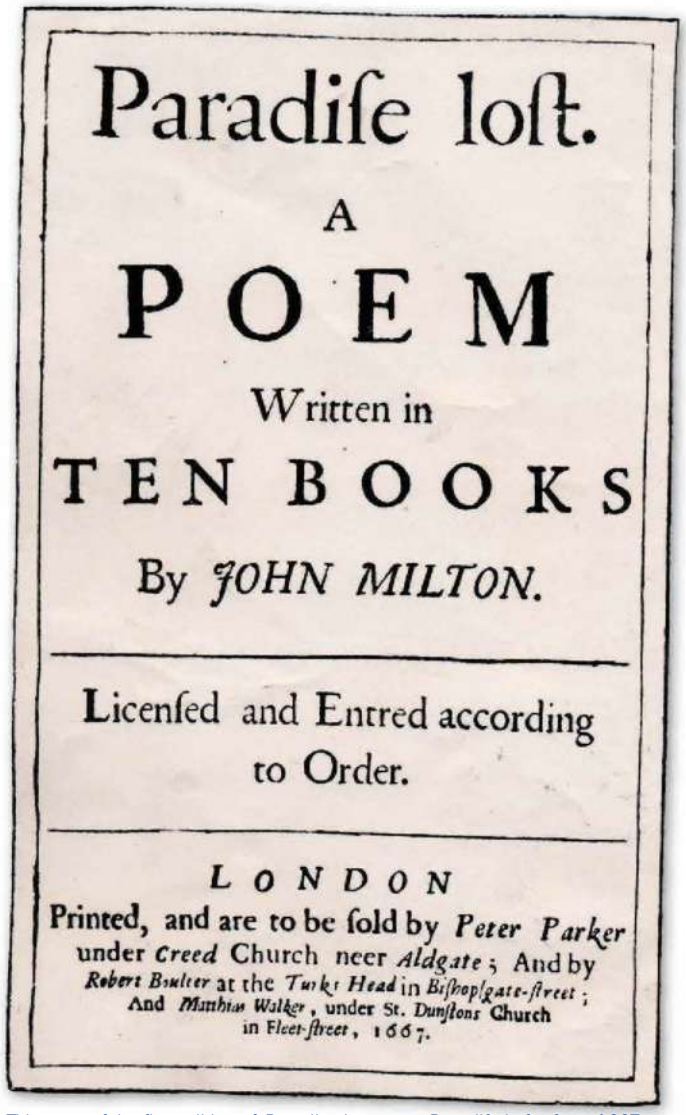
Editor Replies Thank you for sharing your memories Averil. It's so important that these experiences are recorded for future generations.

The 'Long S'

In the 'Focus On' article about Irish newspapers (April), the 'Did You Know?' box wrongly states that double 's' appeared as 'ff' in early print. The character 'ſ' isn't an 'f' but a different form of 's' generally known as the 'long s', also used for a single 's' in some situations. You can usually tell the difference because 'f' will have a bar fully across the down stroke, but the 'long s' will either have no bar or only on the left side. This Wikipedia article is useful: **https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_s**.

For your related search tip, although OCR (optical character recognition) texts often mistranscribe the 'long s' as 'f' I've also seen it appear as other letters, including 'j' and 'l'. So it's better to replace the 's' with a wild card such as ? or *, or you may still miss relevant search results.

Nicola Thwaite, by email



Paradiſe loſt.

A

POEM

Written in

TEN BOOKS

By JOHN MILTON.

Licenſed and Entred according to Order.

LONDON

Printed, and are to be ſold by Peter Parker under Creed Church neer Aldgate; And by Robert Boulter at the Turks Head in Biſhopſgate-ſtreet; And Matthias Walker, under St. Dunſtons Church in Fleet-ſtreet, 1667.

Title page of the first edition of *Paradise Lost* – not *Paradife Loft* – from 1667

Editor Replies Thank you for pulling us up on that one Nicola. You are right that the 'long s', although it looks like an 'f', isn't an 'f'. Also, although it could be doubled up within a word, at the end of a word a double 'ss' would often be depicted as a 'long s' followed by a normal 's'.

@AnneFHLoganKent responded to our online article about vaccination: tinyurl.com/wdytya-vac
My grandfather was a registrar/relieving officer and he collected the vaccination statistics for the area and reported them to the Guardians. All covered in the local press.

Workhouse Ending

I read with interest Peter Higginbotham's article about workhouses (February). I am descended from Joseph Alderton (1759–1818), who ended his days in Nacton Workhouse, Suffolk. Records say that he died from fever aged 59 a pauper, and was buried in a pauper's grave.

The actor John Alderton is also a descendant of Joseph, making him my fourth cousin twice removed. John is descended from Joseph's son Isaac who was apprenticed to a sailor and became a master mariner, and I am descended from Joseph's daughter Sarah who married my 4x great grandfather John Blake.

Lee Passmore, by email

Editor Replies Glad you enjoyed the article Lee. Many of our ancestors will have spent some time in these institutions, so it is worth exploring the records.

YOUR LETTER IN PRINT We reserve the right to edit any letters sent to the magazine. Messages posted to our Facebook wall and tweets sent to us may also appear in print. The choice of Star Letter is the editor's and the prize is subject to change.

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What's On

Email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk* to feature your event here for free

PICK OF THE MONTH

This online talk will explain the value of solicitors' records

Where There's A Will, There's A Lawyer: Using Solicitor Records For Family Research

15 May

w **one-name.org/solicitorrecords/**

Don't miss this chance to improve your understanding of records such as wills

Solicitors' records are often considered inaccessible and difficult and so are overlooked by family and social historians, yet they offer great potential to find out more about our ancestors. In this talk from the Guild of One-Name Studies, genealogist Trisha O'Reilly dives into the types of records that can be found in solicitors' collections, and draws from examples held in public archives in London. The case studies illustrate how such records can be used to deepen our understanding of the past, and the talk will also cover how to find solicitors' records for your own research. Free, advance booking required.

IN PERSON

2024 One Day Conference

4 May

a **Newport Methodist Church**

w **www.isle-of-wight-fhs.co.uk/events/52**

This year's Isle of Wight Family History Society One Day Conference has the theme 'Churches, Chapels and Cemeteries' and will feature talks and family history stalls. £5 for members, otherwise £7.50.

DNA Tests For Family Historians

4 May

a **Dartford Science and Technology College**

t 01322 527604

w **tinyurl.com/nwkfhs-geoff**

Geoff Swinfield will reveal how DNA testing can break down brick walls, uncover ancestors and verify family myths. Free to North West Kent Family History Society members, non-members are asked for a small donation.

2024 Family History Show Case Event

18 May

a **The Arkwright Centre, Chesterfield**

e *secretary@cadfhs.org*

w **cadfhs.org/2024-our-who-do-you-think-you-are-event-18-may-2024/**

Chesterfield and District Family History Society presents its 2024 event. This year's theme is 'Everything Arkwright', in tribute to the entrepreneur Sir Richard Arkwright. There will be two talks plus stalls by family history organisations and the chance to consult genealogy experts. £2.

F2F Day Sampford Courtenay

18 May

a **Sampford Courtenay Village Hall**

w **devonfhs.org.uk/calendar/**

Devon Family History Society's face-to-face day will feature a range of talks about the history of the village Sampford Courtenay. There will also be bookstalls, displays and time for chat, discussions and exploring the church and village. £7.

IN PERSON & ONLINE

The Family And Community Historical Research Society Conference

18 May

a **Premier Inn, Fosse Park, Leicester**

w **fachrs.com**

The theme of the society's 2024 conference, which runs from 11am to 4.30pm, is 'Migration and the UK'. £30 in person (including refreshments and lunch), or £10 online.

Anne Berest In Conversation With Rachel Seiffert

20 May

a **The Wiener Holocaust Library, London**

w **tinyurl.com/wiener-berest**

In this talk, French writer Anne Berest will discuss her book *The Postcard*, inspired by her family's fate in the Holocaust. Free, advance booking required.

ONLINE

Unknown Ancestor Mystery Case Studies

25 April

w **tinyurl.com/sog-uknown-ml**

Michelle Leonard will delve into case studies that demonstrate what can be achieved when you combine family history research with DNA testing in this one-hour talk from the Society of Genealogists. £10.

Using Scottish Land & Property Records In Your Family History Research

2, 9 and 16 May

w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-scottish-land**

In three weekly workshops, each lasting two hours, Lorna Kinnaird of Dunedin Links Genealogy will introduce you to three sets of records – Valuation Rolls, the Register of Sasines and the Register of Deeds. £25 each.

Manorial Records: The Anatomy Of The Memorial Court

8 May

w **gfhs.org.uk/event/manorial-records-the-anatomy-of-the-manorial-court-sarah-pettyfer-online/**

Sarah Pettyfer explains how manorial court records can help in family and house history in this Gloucestershire Family History Society online event. Free.

The Industrial Revolution Course

Starts 10 May

w **tinyurl.com/berksfhs-scot**

This five-week course from Dr Richard Marks explores why the Industrial Revolution happened in Britain, the experiences of those involved, and how the Industrial Revolution can be researched by family historians seeking to trace their ancestors and better understand how they lived and worked during the period. £50, or £45 for members of Berkshire Family History Society.

BOOK AHEAD

Find out about genetic genealogy at this hybrid event

Advancing Genetic Genealogy

7–8 June

a **University of Strathclyde, Glasgow**

t 0141 548 2116

w **tinyurl.com/university-strath-advancing**

This conference from the Strathclyde Institute for Genealogical Studies will cover topics including bioarchaeology, genetics and investigative genetic genealogy. £80 online, £110 in person with an early-bird discount until 3 May or £130 in person standard.

TRISHA O'REILLY

News

Rosemary Collins reports on data releases and genealogy news

Project compiling divorce database secures funding

A historian has received funding for a new project researching divorce in Britain in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Dr Jennifer Aston *(pictured below)*, an associate professor in history at Northumbria University (**northumbria.ac.uk**), has been awarded over £200,000 by the Economic and Social Research Council to explore the history of divorce between 1858 and 1923.

In 1857 the Matrimonial Causes Act was passed, making it possible for the first time for couples to divorce without the passing of a private Act of Parliament. However, the Act allowed men to obtain a divorce if their wife had committed adultery, whereas wives had to prove that their husbands had committed cruelty, desertion, incest or bigamy as well. In 1923 the Matrimonial Causes Act allowed either party to obtain a divorce solely on the grounds of adultery.

Over the next two years Dr Aston will work with The National Archives in Kew, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service, and the charity Women's Aid to create a fuller picture of the impact of the 1857 Act.

In particular, she will be exploring the issue of domestic abuse, the origins of child custody and mediation, the cost of divorce, and the development of the family-law sector.

One of the major outcomes of the project will be a new database, designed in collaboration with the Institute of Historical Research in London, which will include not only statistical data gathered from court records, but also more personal details about the individuals whose names are featured.

This would include not only the petitioners and their children, but also the lawyers who were involved.

A husband beats his wife in an illustration from the 19th century

Dr Aston commented, "I'm interested in finding out more about the people behind the statistics and what their stories can tell us about the true impact of the Matrimonial Causes Act on Victorian families and society."

Manuscript attributed to Shakespeare's sister

A manuscript discovered 250 years ago in William Shakespeare's birthplace was written by his sister Joan, an academic has said.

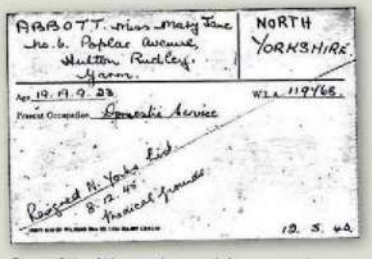
A tract in which the writer, a "J. Shakespeare", pledges to die a Catholic death was found hidden in the rafters of the house in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, c1770. It was described by scholar Edmund Malone, but was later lost. It has been cited as evidence that William Shakespeare's father John was Catholic at a time when the religion was persecuted, so William might have been too, although some believe the document to be a forgery.

Now, Prof Matthew Steggle from the Department of English at the University of Bristol (**bristol.ac.uk**) has learnt that the manuscript is a translation of an Italian text, *The Last Will and Testament of the Soul*. This wasn't written until after John's death, so he has identified "J' as William's sister Joan (1569–1646).

Shakespeare's birthplace on Henley Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, is now a museum

GETTY IMAGES / NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY

NEWS IN BRIEF



One of the Women's Land Army service cards recently added to Findmypast

Findmypast adds Women's Land Army service cards

Service cards for women who served in the Women's Land Army (WLA) during the Second World War have now been released on Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**). The WLA recruited women to work on farms to replace men who had been called up to fight. The Findmypast collection consists of 128,440 index cards held by The National Archives at Kew, containing details such as a woman's address, date of birth and occupation before joining the WLA. The cards were previously exclusive to Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**).

Records of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Care Committee for Refugee Children

Wiener Holocaust Library receives £240,000 grant

The Wiener Holocaust Library (**wienerholocaustlibrary.org**) has received a £240,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a new project, 'Digital Transformation: Connecting Collections and Communities'. The library said that the funding would be used to catalogue and digitise its collections, and organise engagement and education activities for diverse audiences. The Wiener Holocaust Library was founded by Dr Alfred Wiener in 1934, and is Britain's leading archive on the Holocaust, the Nazi era and genocide.

WIENER HOLOCAUST LIBRARY COLLECTIONS / GETTY IMAGES / NATIONAL MUSEUMS LIVERPOOL

These Irish immigrants, recent arrivals in New York, were photographed on 16 March 1926

Irish emigrant letters go online

A website has been launched containing a searchable database of digitised letters sent between Irish emigrants in North America and other destinations overseas and their relations back home in Ireland.

IMIRCE (**https://imirce.universityofgalway.ie**) was created by the University of Galway, and digitises a collection donated by US historian Kerby A Miller.

Prof Miller's collection includes approximately 7,000 letters from Irish emigrants dating from the late 17th to the mid-20th century, as well as memoirs and other historical documents.

The letters provide poignant insights into ordinary people's lives. In one of them, written in about 1910, Ann McNally in Mullanarry Townland, Magheross Parish, near Carrickmacross, County Monaghan, writes to her sister in the USA, "Poor Thomas [her husband] dide the 8 of June last May God have mercy on him. he was only one month sick i am nerly gon my Self."

The website also has maps showing the locations of the letters' writers and their recipients, and a timeline showing the years in which they were sent.

The team behind IMIRCE is also seeking donations of more letters and memoirs by Irish emigrants, particularly those written in Irish.

If you have any documents to donate, you can get in touch via the website.

CAN YOU HELP?

National Museums Liverpool (**liverpoolmuseums.org.uk**) is appealing for information about the subject of William L Windus' 1844 portrait *The Black Boy*. The painting, which depicts a young black child, is part of the Walker Art Gallery collections and currently on display in the city's International Slavery Museum. The heritage organisation is conducting a research project into the painting funded by the Understanding British Portraits network. It hopes to hear from anyone who has more information about the artist, or can help to identify the unknown sitter. Members of the public are invited to submit information using the online form at **tinyurl.com/google-form-windus**.

Can you shed any light on this portrait painted by William L Windus?

Findmypast adds Country Life archive

Family history website Findmypast (findmypast.co.uk) has published the back catalogue of the long-running British magazine *Country Life*.

The site has digitised more than 500,000 pages of the magazine, dating from 1897–2009, in a partnership with publisher Future.

Country Life is included in Findmypast's newspaper archive, which is available as part of the website's 'Pro' subscription tier.

Princess Elizabeth, photographed in 1945

Famous people featured in *Country Life* over the years include Nancy Astor (1879–1964), who became the first female MP to sit in the House of Commons; Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940), the country's prime minister (1937–1940); and Princess Elizabeth (1926–2022), the future Elizabeth II, pictured in her Auxiliary Territorial Service uniform in 1945.

Country Life has also featured country houses and historical sites. In 1915, Stonehenge was advertised as part of the sale of the Amesbury Abbey estate. It was bought for £6,000 by local barrister Cecil Chubb, who subsequently gifted it to the nation.

TNA reaches milestone in army-records project

The Cameron Highlanders leave Aldershot by train in 1939 on the way to France

The first phase of the transfer of post-First World War armed-forces records from the Ministry of Defence to The National Archives (TNA) has been completed on schedule. A TNA spokesperson confirmed to *WDYTYA? Magazine* that all of the records of non-officers serving in the British Army were transferred by the end of March. About 600,000 records are listed on TNA's online catalogue Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**), and the others can be requested by making a Freedom of Information request to TNA. In total, approximately 9.7 million records will be transferred, and the project is expected to be completed in March 2027.

Hove Library

The library is auctioning off some of its archives after discovering that conditions in its upper and lower galleries are unsuitable for them (**tinyurl.com/bbc-bright-lib**)

1,769,007

The number of Tipperary Roman Catholic parish records that have been added to **thegenealogist.co.uk**

200+

The number of sea shells, including some collected by Captain Cook's expedition, that have gone on display after being saved from a skip (**tinyurl.com/indy-shells**)

Barking & Dagenham

A new Women's Museum has opened in the London borough (**tinyurl.com/bbc-women-mus**)

217 years

The age of a parcel, containing a Faroe Islands sweater, that has just been opened by researchers at The National Archives in Kew (**tinyurl.com/tna-faroe**)

A 'smeller' checks casks' cleanliness at the Guinness brewery in Dublin, 1953

FUTURE/GETTY IMAGES

Records of Guinness employees released

More than 1.6 million records of employees at Dublin's Guinness Storehouse were released online on 17 March – St Patrick's Day.

The records are held by the Guinness Storehouse Archives (**www.guinness-storehouse.com/en/discover**), and have been digitised by family history website Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**).

Ancestry has added two sets of records – 'Ireland, Guinness Trade Ledgers, 1860–1960' (consisting of 1,452,426 records) and 'Ireland, Guinness Employee Records, 1799–1939' (consisting of 204,604 records).

Although many of the staff were based in Dublin, there are also employees based in Cork, London and anywhere Guinness had breweries. In the First World War, many of the employees are marked as "Army Candidate".

Todd Godfrey, vice-president of global content at Ancestry, said, "We're thrilled to give people a chance to connect with a new part of their heritage and fill any gaps in their family trees. With the rich history of Guinness, digitising these records allows people to explore an entirely new side of their culture – no matter how much they currently know about their background. Our partnership with Guinness has been a decade-long endeavour and we are excited to bring it to Ancestry this St Patrick's Day."

Medieval Migration

Alan Crosby reveals how you can trace migrant ancestors in the medieval period

Recently I've been doing work on medieval towns in north-west England, looking at (among other topics) migration from the countryside to the towns, and also from small towns to larger towns. This is something of major concern to family historians, since it's almost guaranteed that at least a few of our own forebears were migrants at some point, but medieval genealogy poses huge challenges.

In more recent times, censuses help us to trace people's movements, and from the mid-16th century onwards parish registers may provide key information. There is also a wealth of statistics and analyses if we want to research the background – official reports, social history investigations, and academic assessments use census and other data to chart the numbers and directions of migration, and to seek possible explanations why people moved.

We as family historians can very often add lots of useful detail to the findings of these researchers, because we may know the specific reasons why our relations moved. Their stories might be impossible to ascertain except through the tales and memories passed down to us from previous generations.

But with medieval genealogy, we have to rely on sources that are much less comprehensive or detailed. We can scarcely ever trace particular individuals or even families. However, it is possible to look at the general patterns of migration in the 13th and 14th centuries using surnames.

Especially helpful medieval sources are local and national taxation lists

Locative surnames are the key – those derived from the name of a place. Somebody might be known as William de Broughton or John de York, meaning that he or his immediate forebears had come from Broughton or York. If they lived in, say, Preston and came from the town, they would not be called 'de Preston', simply because so many other folk were also 'de Preston'. However, if they moved from Preston to Manchester then they were much more distinctive, and would become known by their place of origin: "That's John from Preston."

Especially helpful medieval sources are local and national taxation lists, giving people's surnames, from the 13th and 14th centuries (including the poll tax of 1377–1381). Historians have looked at these sources in different parts of England, and broadly reached the same conclusions. Migration to growing urban communities made a crucial contribution to their expansion and economic development, and the geographical patterns are striking.

The surname evidence shows that many newcomers in towns had moved very short distances, a matter of a mile or two from the rural communities immediately outside them. For example, here in Preston at the end of the 14th century there were people called 'de Fishwick' and 'de Ribbleton'. Those places were then separate townships, but now they are inner-city districts. When the late historian Eleanora Carus-Wilson looked at the surnames from Stratford-upon-Avon in the 13th century she found the same pattern: over half of the places from which migrants came were within six miles of the town.

Our medieval ancestors were attracted by the exciting prospect of town life, but for practical reasons they could not travel far, so chose to move to the nearest convenient centre. Towns offered the possibility of better earnings, more choice of employment, a livelier social life, and independence. In the country you were generally subject to the constraints and restrictions of the feudal system, but towns provided dramatically more freedom, rights and liberties, especially over property and work.

One of my own direct ancestors must have moved from a village called Crosby, probably to a nearby town. But there are seven places called Crosby in my road atlas, and I don't know the name of the town. I'm stuck… but another forebear had the surname Essex, which is much more straightforward. I am descended from Essex Man!

ALAN CROSBY lives in Lancashire and is the editor of *The Local Historian*

ILLUSTRATION WWW.SUEGENT.COM

THE BIG FOUR TESTED

Nick Peers reveals how our reader panel rated the leading paid-for genealogical websites

GETTY IMAGES

The internet has both revolutionised and democratised family history, putting all of the tools you need to research, edit and share your family tree at your fingertips. These days, it's almost impossible to trawl the web in search of sources, documents, photographs and far-flung relations without coming into contact with at least one of the 'Big Four' paid-for genealogical websites: Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), MyHeritage (**myheritage.com**) and TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**). Between them, they host billions of records, photographs, newspaper pages, user-generated trees and much, much more.

But which site best meets your own particular needs? And how does it compare to the others in terms of features, ease of use, and ultimately – given you're typically spending over £100 on an annual subscription – value for money?

Meet The Panel

These were the questions we knew needed answering. And who better to investigate on your behalf than your fellow readers – enthusiastic family historians just like yourselves? We asked for help, and you responded. We've handpicked five readers covering the full range of experience, from seasoned genealogists with decades of practice to one beginner who has only recently picked up the baton after a 15-year gap. We gave them subscriptions to all four websites and asked them to evaluate each one across a range of criteria, from the quality of their record collections and tree-building capabilities to how easy they are to use and search.

You can find out more about each member of the panel on the right, before turning the page to discover what they thought about each of the four websites. Armed with the benefit of their experience and hard-won insights, you'll have a much better idea of what each site can offer you, and whether it meets your current needs. Happy hunting!

DAVE MORRIS

I've been researching my tree seriously for over 22 years, building on the work of my uncle. I have a huge tree, since I spend an inordinate amount of time on it and follow all the branches as far as I can. I'm a long-term user of Ancestry and FamilySearch and have done a DNA test, which is now finding relations in distant corners of the world. I'm fascinated by graveyards and church memorials.

WHAT I'VE LEARNT I enjoyed having a chance to see what other sites have to offer and discovering that they all have their unique hidden gems.

LISA PAINES

I first dabbled in my family history in 2007 using free websites, but only restarted in December 2023 after retiring. This has been my first look at paid-for websites – it's amazing the wealth of information that's easily accessible. So far, my research has taken me to workhouses, jails, industrial schools, the First World War and even emigration to Canada.

WHAT I'VE LEARNT The information I've found in the newspaper archives has been fascinating, providing such a detailed look on life – even reports on who gave what at a wedding!

STEVE RAVEN

I've been researching my family since 2020. I became interested when I found long-lost family in Australia on my grandfather's side; this spurred me on to do more and find out his story. I use Ancestry for the bulk of my research, along with Findmypast for anything else like newspapers. I'd describe myself as an intermediate researcher.

WHAT I'VE LEARNT I was really impressed with MyHeritage and the website's use of AI. The photos were amazing!

JULIE SYMONDS

I started my genealogy journey by chance in 1996, on a rainy afternoon in the local library. I came across an index for the local census. A look at the microfiche left me hooked! We were computing pioneers, so it wasn't too long before I was using software to produce a tree and store data, alongside the International Genealogical Index and census CD-Roms. The onset of DNA testing has opened a whole new world. I just love the detective work.

WHAT I'VE LEARNT If Findmypast folded, I would definitely try MyHeritage rather than Ancestry.

KAY WASHBROOK

I've always had an interest in family history, but didn't start researching seriously until about 25 years ago, and soon became hooked. I also started on my husband's family too which proved to be quite challenging in parts, but also very rewarding, including discovering that we are sixth cousins! For me it's not just about dates – the enjoyment comes from finding out about our ancestors' lives.

WHAT I'VE LEARNT I was already familiar with three of the websites, but I was surprised by the extra features I found while exploring.

ANCESTRY

Ancestry offers a huge selection of records, plus tools for DNA results and tree-building

ancestry.co.uk/offers/subscribe

PRICE *Core UK* £10.99/month, £95.99/year; *Premium UK and Ireland* £13.99/month, £119.99/year; *Worldwide* £19.99/month, £179.99/year; *All Access including* ***Newspapers.com*** £29.99/month, £149/six months

EASE OF USE 7.6/10

Our five readers were largely comfortable navigating Ancestry's pages – Steve thought its interface was beginner-friendly, while Dave described the top navigation bar as "reasonably comprehensive". It wasn't all plain sailing, however. For Kay the site's homepage was quite cluttered, and both she and Lisa felt that the help function could be better signposted. Julie and Kay also struggled with a lack of breadcrumbs to help them navigate backwards without having to resort to their web browser's back button.

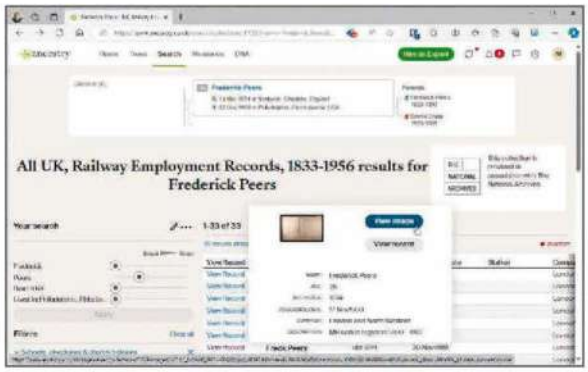
POWER OF SEARCH 7.8/10

The readers were reasonably impressed with Ancestry's search tools. Lisa reported that it was "fairly easy to find a record but did depend on how you could narrow down the search". This echoed what others thought – Kay felt the search offered too many options, which could prove counter-productive. Dave also struggled with certain name-based searches, and criticised the order of categories given in the results.

Also, Kay and Julie liked the ability to roll your cursor over search results to preview entries, for example to see likely spouses on marriage-index searches.

FAMILY TREE-BUILDING AND HINTS 8.8/10

Ancestry's family tree builder and suggested hints tools were best in class. Everyone found the tree-building tools easy to use, whether uploading a GEDCOM file or starting from scratch. Displaying, reviewing and adding hints were also favourably commented on. "Having viewed the other sites, the way Ancestry presents the data when looking at an individual is by far my favourite," said Dave.



Ancestry's search results include previews of images

CORE UK RECORDS 8.2/10

Ancestry scored highly here, although Steve pointed out that "some of the census records scans aren't always clear". There was some divided opinion on parish registers and BMD records – Julie felt Ancestry offered "a greater number of actual images of records rather than just transcriptions", but Kay noted that parish records varied by county, with some offering just partial transcriptions.

Our reviewers were impressed with the large number of exclusive records

SPECIALIST UK COLLECTIONS 8/10

Our reviewers were impressed with the large number of exclusive records, each highlighting a different set. Both Kay and Lisa admired the Card Catalogue, which makes it easy to browse the extensive record sets by category. Dave did, however, complain that many military records are hidden behind an additional subscription (Forces War Records; **uk.forceswarrecords.com**).

MOBILE 7.8/10

Again, our testers were largely impressed. Steve was "quietly addicted", regularly checking for updates and DNA matches. Lisa described it as "a good resource… when out and about", while Julie felt its light background made the information easier to read than when on a PC.

VALUE 8/10

Everyone – including long-term subscribers – felt Ancestry was worth it due to the range and breadth of its records, although Dave did add a note of caution that it depends on Ancestry continuing to add new collections. Kay also recommended the occasional short-term upgrade: "The one-month 'Worldwide' sub is good value for someone wanting a quick blast of non-UK research."

SUMMARY/FINAL SCORE

Ancestry has a vast breadth and range of record sets and impressive tree-building tools. The mobile app was favourably received, but the sheer number of options offered by the powerful search function can be hard to manage for new users.

8.2/10

PROS

- Easy to use and navigate.
- Wide range of records from UK, Ireland and abroad including many exclusive collections. Very strong for London research.
- Tree-building tools best in class.

CONS

- Search tools can be confusing.
- Focus too much on US records.
- Website gives hints from other researchers' online family trees equal prominence to matches in the records.

FINDMYPAST

The 1921 census and the British Newspaper Archive are highlights

findmypast.co.uk/subscribe

PRICE *Starter* £10.99/month; *Plus* £14.45/month, £38.49/quarter, £134.99/year; *Pro including historic newspapers* £19.49/month, £49.99/quarter, £184.99/year; *Premium including unlimited access to the 1921 census of England and Wales* £59.99/quarter, £199.99/year

Findmypast offers integrated hints when viewing your family tree

EASE OF USE 8.5/10

Our readers concluded that Findmypast sets the standard for navigation. "Easy to understand", "uncluttered" and "clearly laid out" were just some of the positive comments. Lisa also highlighted the "wealth of help available, which was invaluable to someone new to genealogy like myself".

POWER OF SEARCH 8.9/10

The website's search tool also received unequivocal praise. "This seems to be the only site that presents search results in a logical manner – by name and date," said Dave, a view echoed by Julie who added, "It is also very easy to click between the categories on the sidebar to filter any further results." Kay was impressed by "how it updates the results in real time as you complete the search form, so you can add date/place filters one at a time to reduce the number [of matches]".

FAMILY TREE-BUILDING AND HINTS 7.8/10

Our readers had slightly mixed feelings about the site's tree-building and hints. Experienced genealogists Julie and Kay found the tree builder simple to use, whether importing or starting from scratch. Beginner Lisa was impressed yet slightly overwhelmed by the amount of information offered, but conceded that it "did give the opportunity to confirm what you may have thought and allow you to build the tree with confidence". Fellow newbie Steve liked the look, but found it difficult to navigate.

CORE UK RECORDS 8.2/10

Findmypast's core record sets impressed our panel. With exclusive access to the 1921 census, good quality images and an address search option, it scored well for census research. Its large parish register collection was also praised. Kay expressed her preference for Findmypast over Ancestry partly because of its Staffordshire parish records "my main area of interest!".

All of our readers cited the 1921 census as the standout specialist collection

SPECIALIST UK COLLECTIONS 8/10

The main highlight for our panel was the ability to access the material in the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**) if you have a 'Pro' subscription. "I've found so much more about relatives and houses than I thought possible, some good news and some not so, but it painted pictures in new colours for me!" enthused Steve. Other specialist collections highlighted by the testers, included the National Schools collection and electoral registers. Dave also praised the site's regularly updated 1939 Register, where redactions are removed over time, adding, "The list of collections is the easiest to access and search from, although a chronological list would be useful to see what is new."

MOBILE 7.4/10

Findmypast's mobile app garnered praise from our group by closely mirroring the experience of accessing the website using a web browser. Julie reported that it was "good when out and about and to go through hints". However, she did report that she struggled with the lack of a back button for navigation when using the app on her tablet. Steve also felt that the website seemed to offer "more when it comes to searching".

VALUE 8.4/10

Every single member of our reader panel felt that Findmypast was worth the price of a subscription, although Kay did share one significant bugbear: "Generally it's good value for money although access to the 1921 census is expensive at the moment – depends how desperate you are to research that era!"

SUMMARY/FINAL SCORE

Findmypast appeals for its excellent set of records, including – for now at least – exclusive access to the 1921 census of England and Wales, all wrapped up in a user-friendly website. Its tree-building tools continue to evolve, along with its newspaper archive, which now has tools for clipping and attaching stories to your tree.

8.2/10

PROS

- Easy and intuitive to both use and navigate.
- Exclusive collections including newspapers, 1921 census and parish registers with images.
- User-friendly search tool, and the results are updated in real time.

CONS

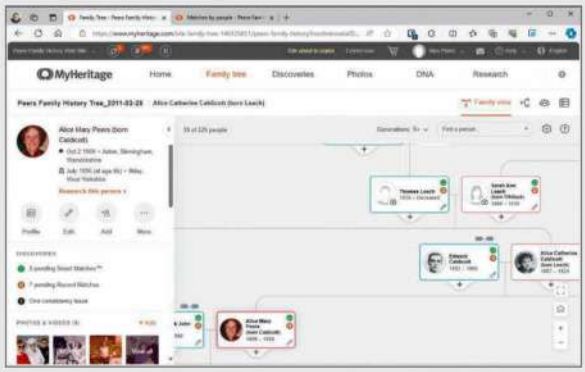
- Tree-building tools can be offputting for beginners to the site.
- 1921 census of England and Wales only available to 'Premium' subscribers.
- No facilities for uploading and using DNA results.

MYHERITAGE

Although this website's main focus is not on the UK, it still has plenty to offer British genealogists, especially those with overseas family

myheritage.com/pricing

PRICE *Premium* £59 for the first year, then £89/year; *PremiumPlus* £109 for the first year, then £169/year; *Data* £79 for the first year, then £129/year; *Complete* £139 for the first year, then £229/year; *Omni* pricing TBA



MyHeritage offers impressive facilities for building a tree

EASE OF USE 7.2/10

Most of our panel were impressed with MyHeritage's layout and navigation – Dave commended its 'Categories' side panel, which is always on view, while Lisa felt that it was "very easy to use", with "clear options along the top of the screen [and] loads of help available". The only dissenting voice came from Kay, who found the website "confusing and a bit irritating", criticising the site's focus on family trees rather than research, which "almost seems to be an afterthought".

POWER OF SEARCH 7.2/10

Our readers were less impressed with the website's search tools. One note of praise came from Lisa who found searching and obtaining the correct records "very easy, providing you check the authenticity of the records first". Dave noted the emphasis on placing family trees before records and bemoaned a lack of options for filtering results by country only, while Kay found that the whole experience was "a bit underwhelming".

FAMILY TREE-BUILDING AND HINTS 7.1/10

Lisa and Steve drew particular attention to the site's AI capabilities: "Easy to generate and contains a detailed bio of the person selected," according to Lisa. Others were less keen – Dave was quite impressed with certain parts of the tree but bemoaned the lack of sources or hints on the tree display. Kay found tree-building difficult and counter-intuitive in places: "I could add records but then not see where they were attached to the individual."

CORE UK RECORDS 5.8/10

MyHeritage ticked most boxes for core record sets. Dave was particularly impressed with the census search results – these "have the best presentation with family members clearly shown which makes life easier". However, Steve struggled with searches: "The records didn't always match up with the tree, a lot of the time because of a same forename." Julie noted a scarcity of Scottish and Irish records, while both Dave and Kay highlighted the lack of images for General Register Office indexes, parish registers and the 1939 Register.

Dave was particularly impressed with the census search results

SPECIALIST UK COLLECTIONS 4.8/10

Our readers found little in the way of additional records to inspire them. This will come down to your individual tree – Kay noted the presence of "some European vital records, and the site seems to have lots of immigration records". Dave was pleased to be able to load his AncestryDNA results onto the site, which "I have matched with some different close relatives overseas". MyHeritage has also just launched its own newspaper collection (**oldnews.com**), but there is very little UK content as yet.

MOBILE 6.1/10

Steve was the biggest fan of the app: "[As] a photographer too I use this for all the family photos. Most of the photo restorations look incredible, some not so but with AI I'm still impressed." Kay liked the clean design, although felt it needed a larger screen than her 8-inch tablet. Dave also thought that it provided a closer approximation to the website than other apps.

VALUE 6.4/10

Lisa felt the cost of subscribing using the first year discount was "good value for money", but Steve felt he'd "want it a little cheaper as I used it more for its photos and biographies as opposed to the records". Julie found it costly, but would try MyHeritage over Ancestry if she had to switch. For Dave, a lack of unique UK content counted against the site.

SUMMARY/FINAL SCORE

MyHeritage's tree-building and DNA-matching tools are impressive. Its embrace of AI is clearly aimed at making it easy and fun to quickly build a family tree and search records. The core UK records are covered, but not all have images.

6.4/10

PROS

- Tree builder helps find distant relatives.
- Newly added newspapers collection (**oldnews.com**).
- AI-powered photograph editing and story generation.

CONS

- Few unique UK records or images – mostly transcriptions.
- Search tools need refining and filters should be improved.
- Focus is more on tree-building than records.

THEGENEALOGIST

Highlights include its Map Explorer tool, census address search and exclusive records

thegenealogist.co.uk/compare/

PRICE *Starter* £14.95/quarter, £54.95/year; *Gold* £38.95/quarter, £98.95/year; *Diamond* £139.95/year

EASE OF USE 5.6/10

TheGenealogist's redesigned front page looks quite inviting, but our readers found it less appealing once they started digging deeper. In addition to struggling with the Tree View when trying to see a single generation of her tree, Julie also noted that "the layout of searches is not very intuitive". Kay described the user interface as "dated in parts", but found it "fairly easy to navigate".

POWER OF SEARCH 6.5/10

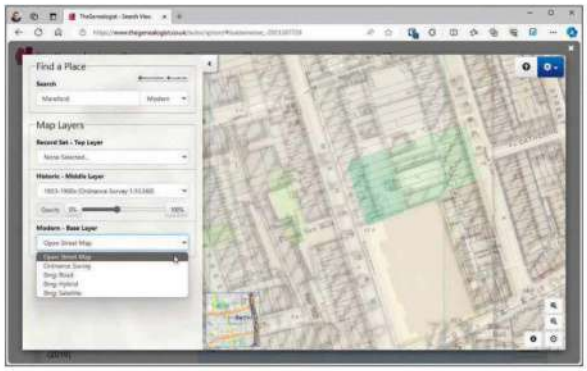
The search tool left our readers divided, although a new beta function is rolling out to improve the look of search results. Julie disliked having to change the 'Year of event' date depending on whether she was searching for a birth or marriage. However, TheGenealogist did score points for its address and family search options. Dave praised its searches for double-barrelled and composite surnames, as well as name searches within book texts.

FAMILY TREE-BUILDING AND HINTS 7.5/10

TheGenealogist's tree-building tool is based on its TreeView software. It divided our panel, with Lisa finding it "quite difficult and disjointed". Both Dave and Julie commended its GEDCOM-uploading abilities, but Dave felt the presentation was "a bit of a mess" while Julie found entering data "long-winded". At the other end of the scale, Kay concluded that despite the "dated" user interface, "It was surprisingly simple to use and I loved it!"

CORE UK RECORDS 6.6/10

Kay describes TheGenealogist as her "go-to site for census searching" thanks to its ability to cross-reference individuals across counties and years. She also praised the quality of census images, especially for 1841, finding them easier to read. However, Dave pointed out that some records – including the 1939 Register and many of its parish register collections – were transcription-only. The website also has very few exclusive parish collections.



You can view your ancestor's address on maps from different eras at TheGenealogist

A new beta function is rolling out to improve the look of search results

SPECIALIST UK COLLECTIONS 7.2/10

Our panel appreciated two of the main exclusive specialist collections on TheGenealogist: tithe-map records and the Valuation Office Survey (also known as the Lloyd George Domesday Survey). Although Kay lamented the "slow progress" on the Valuation Office Survey rollout which left much of the UK still not covered and a strong emphasis on the south-east. These records, along with census records, work well with its Map Explorer tool. This attaches records to old maps which you can then overlay onto current ones to help locate addresses. Dave enjoyed some of their scanned texts such as *Burke's Landed Gentry*. There is also a 1921 Census Substitute – made up of records from military, education and trade directories.

MOBILE 6/10

Many members of our panel were confused by TheGenealogist's mobile app being called TreeView. Lisa felt it was still hampered by the website's search page, while Kay reported that the relatively small number of records worked in the app's favour, making "searching for census entries simple and very quick, [while] the resulting images are clear".

VALUE 6/10

Three of our panel couldn't justify the cost of a subscription compared to its rivals. Lisa felt the site "would be a good resource" once you're familiar with it, while Kay found its 'Starter' package good value because it has "more records than similar packages from the other sites".

SUMMARY/FINAL SCORE

TheGenealogist didn't wow our readers as much as its bigger rivals. It can feel like there's a lack of original content on there, with many record sets quite small. However, the site does offer some useful tools, such as Map Explorer and good census search options.

6.5/10

PROS

- Map Explorer helps pinpoint old addresses.
- Excellent census images and search options including family and address searches.
- New beta search tool looks promising.

CONS

- Too many transcription-only records.
- Can be tricky to navigate and search.
- Tree-building tool looks dated, and isn't as intuitive as those featured on rival websites.

RISKY BUSINESS

It can be tempting to duplicate the information you find in another researcher's online family tree, says **Chloe O'Shea**. But there are a number of potential problems with cutting corners…

1 A Lack Of Sources

Always be wary of trees with no sources attached, and never blindly copy them. If you can verify a person's research through multiple sources – which may already be attached to their tree – then this can help to prove the line is correct.

2 A Gap In The Trail

If an online tree appears to have solved your brick wall, always ask where the evidence is – even if multiple trees share the same information. It's entirely possible that all of those family historians have just copied one another, and nobody has taken the time to properly research the link between a parent and child. For example, my 5x great grandmother Elizabeth Samways has her father listed as John on 35 online trees, but I have proved that her father was actually Henry. While I have the sources to back this up, my tree is kept private meaning there are no correct family trees featuring Elizabeth currently online.

Piggybacking research that you see online can lead you to disaster

3 A Claim To Fame

There appears to be an increasing trend for family historians to want to uncover a relationship to royalty or a celebrity, and for their enthusiasm to overcome their caution. You should research such lines the

GETTY IMAGES

same way that you would a connection to anybody else: go step by step, and thoroughly check all available sources.

4 A Relative's Incorrect Coat Of Arms

You don't need to be an expert in heraldry, but always remember that a coat of arms is not something that belongs to a particular surname. If one of your forebears has a coat of arms attached to them on somebody else's tree, never copy this without researching it first. Many are attached incorrectly, and are usually easy to spot.

5 Misidentified Old Family Photographs

If you find one of your relations on another tree with a photograph attached, this can be very exciting. But it is always worth asking the person who uploaded the photograph how they came across the image, and who passed it down to them. This can help you assess the likelihood that you are indeed looking at your ancestor rather than a stranger. I have been given two photographs of my great great grandfather that are clearly depicting two different men.

6 Nonsensical Dates

If key dates don't add up, it's a sign that a tree has been badly researched. This includes a mother giving birth two years after she died, or a person living to the age of 130. Check trees for mistakes such as these so you know not to waste your time.

7 Time-Consuming Mistakes

By copying one wrong forebear across and tracing this person's branch further back, you could end up spending years – if not decades – researching a line that is not actually related to you. We may desperately want to break down a brick wall or be related to royalty, but copying details from someone else's online tree will not make this true. Your time is valuable, and you owe it to yourself, and past and future generations of your family, to use this time to research your tree thoroughly source by source.

You owe it to yourself, and past and future generations of your family, to research your tree thoroughly source by source

8 Misleading DNA Shortcuts

Autosomal DNA testing can help prove your tree as far back as six or seven generations. However, this must be done using the correct means. You need to be very careful about the suggestions provided by DNA testing sites, because they are not always as accurate as they might seem at first glance. This includes ThruLines on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk/dna**) and the Theory of Family Relativity on MyHeritage (**myheritage.com**), both of which are based on the information in other people's online trees – so can be all too fallible.

9 Quick And Dirty Trees

Family historians who are trying to prove a DNA link often create a 'quick and dirty' online tree. These are put together less carefully than normal, flitting from record to record and person to person to see if a suggested relationship tallies up with their DNA results. These family trees should always be kept private. In many cases you will find that they have been made public instead, and are full of false information that someone else may copy. Another researcher may then see that two people have the same information on their trees, assume it is correct and copy it across… and so the trend continues.

10 Tiny Traps

Even if an online tree has a majority of information correct, copying one wrong detail can disrupt and derail your research. There may be an incorrect occupation, or details of a false criminal past. These 'facts' can make you waste your time searching for records that don't exist, and lead you to believe things about your ancestor that just aren't true.

Chloe O'Shea is a genealogist and the author of *Discover Your Dorset Ancestors* (2022). Find out more at her site **thepastrevealed.co.uk**

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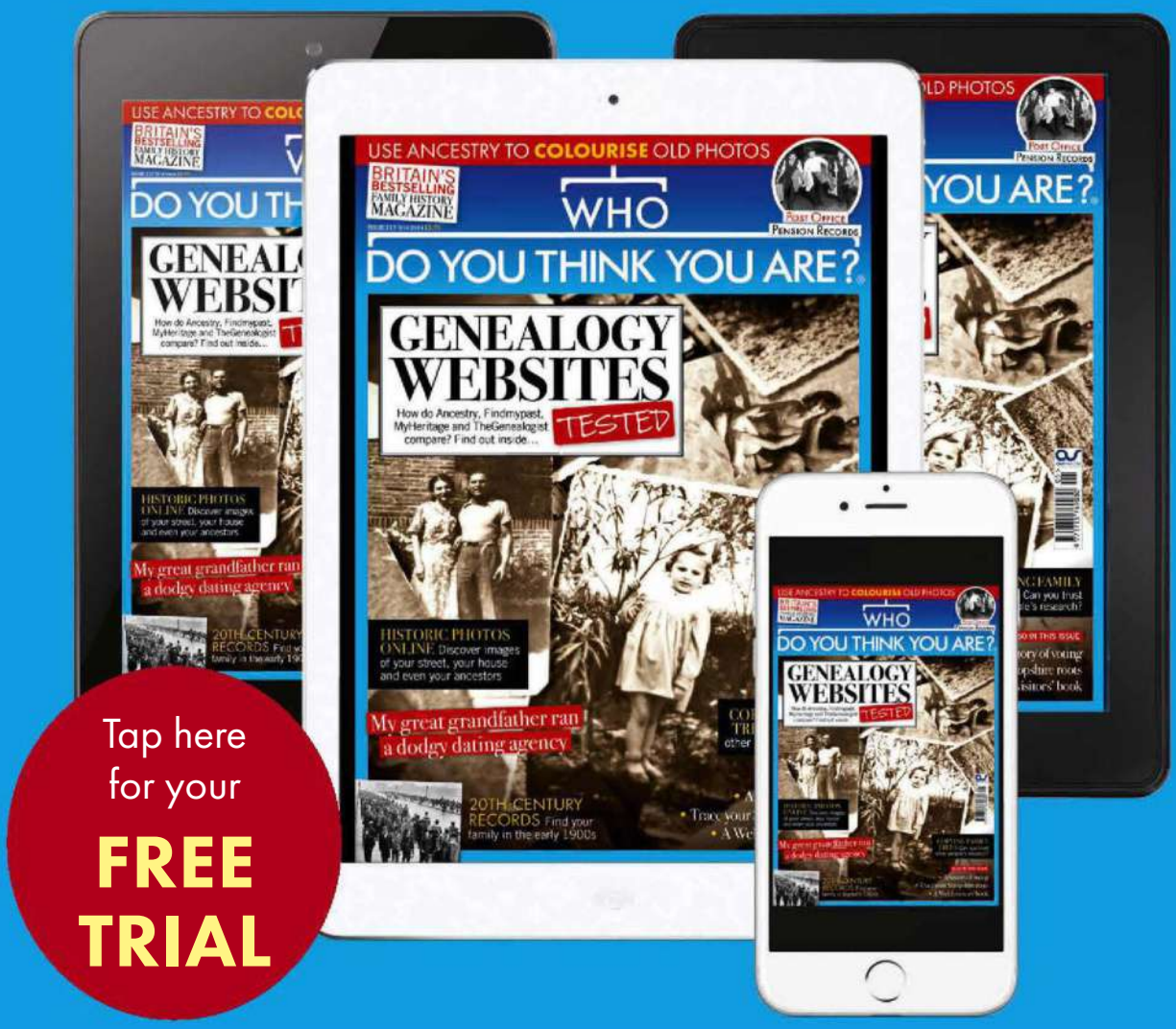

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WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

'My Kin Built New Lives Far From Home'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

When Lucy Parker began investigating her Norwegian relations, she had no inkling of the scope of their travels, says **Claire Vaughan**

Many family historians in the UK have been surprised to discover that they have a small amount of Norwegian DNA. This faint genetic echo dates back to when the British Isles were settled by Scandinavian invaders, as part of the country's rich history of comings and goings. However, Lucy Parker, who lives in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, is 36 per cent Norwegian – and like their Viking forebears, her ancestors were pioneers who adventured to all corners of the globe.

Lucy's great great grandfather Jakob Wedvig with his second wife Louise

"I'd grown up knowing there was Norwegian in our family – my mum was in touch with some of her relatives over there," explains Lucy. "I didn't know very much, though; just a few names. I loved the thought of a little part of me being from what felt like an exotic location."

I wrote to a lot of local Norwegian archives requesting transcriptions

When she met her husband, he showed her how to trace her family history. "I couldn't wait to find out more about my Scandinavian side, and the history behind the names and photos my mum had shown me."

Lucy began with her English grandparents, Frances Usher and Glyn Burchill. The Norwegian line is through her grandmother's mother, Petrodine Usher. According to family lore, Petrodine had an illegitimate child in Norway before she came over to England. Not long after arriving here she met Lucy's great grandfather, Oliver, and they married in 1911.

One of the more colourful stories about Petrodine involved Sir Winston Churchill.

"My nan's sisters said that before she met her husband, Petrodine had worked for Churchill in London. They didn't say what she did, or how she ended up working for him. When she got married, he paid for all the lino in her house (back then, people had lino instead of carpet). I don't know how much of the story is true."

Petrodine's maiden name, Wedvig, gave the first clue as to where in Norway Lucy should begin her search. "There wasn't as much information online when I started as there is now, so I contacted some family history organisations to see if they could help." They informed her that the name couldn't start with a W because the letter doesn't exist in Norwegian, "but my family said that was definitely how it was spelled".

Norwegian Naming

As with other Scandinavian countries, Norway has a patronymic naming system. So someone called Peder whose father is called John would be known as Peder Johnsen, and a daughter would be Johnsdatter. But they would also have a third name – that of the farm where they lived. After a lot of digging, Lucy discovered that Wedvig was indeed the name of the property the family had lived on in a village called Eid in the south. They later moved to the town of Mosjøen, about 300 miles to the north-east.

"I don't know where the farm's name came from. It's so unusual, it's helped me with my research."

Petrodine's marriage certificate revealed that her father, Jakob, was a police officer. It was the first hint at her life before she arrived in England. "I wrote to a lot of local Norwegian archives requesting transcriptions of records, and got back a little further each time. Gradually, more records from Norway appeared on the internet too."

The turning point came when the Norwegian censuses came ▶

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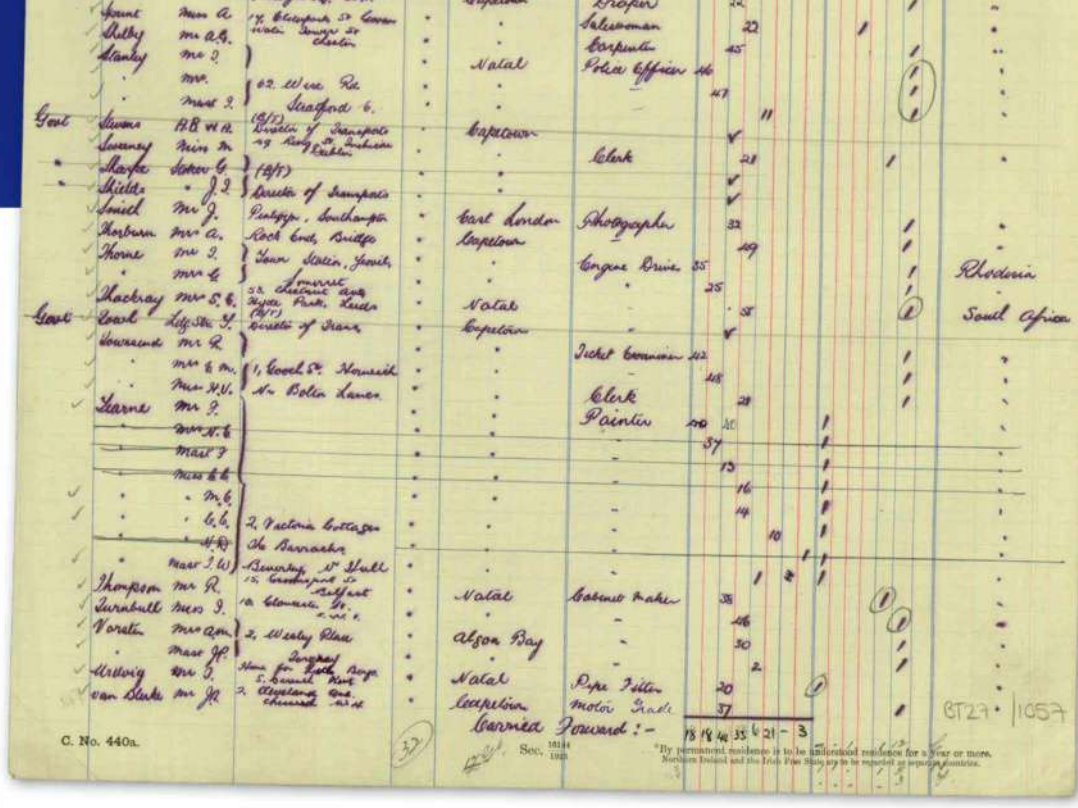
Lucy Parker's Family Tree

"Bearing in mind that there were comparatively few people in Norway in 1801, it became fairly easy to get that far back," Lucy says



Lucy's great uncle Trygve Wedvig was listed as "T Urdvig" when he sailed from the UK in 1924

online – first the 1865, 1875 and 1891 censuses and later the 1900, 1910 and 1801 ones.

"Bearing in mind that there were comparatively few people living in Norway in 1801, it became fairly easy to get that far back – especially as Norwegian birth, marriage and death records began appearing on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) as well."

Petrodine was born in 1883 to Jakob Mattias Pedersen Wedvig and Petrodine Andrea Asbjornsen. She was the youngest of their seven children: Peder Kornelius, Hansine, Betzy, Ragna, Charlotte and Karl. "According to the census and other records, Jakob had been a magistrate and became the town's first police officer. I even found a photograph of him – he looks quite stern.

Census Surprise

"I knew the names of most of her sisters from the family already, but no one had ever mentioned an older brother called Peder. So finding him on the 1865 census was really exciting."

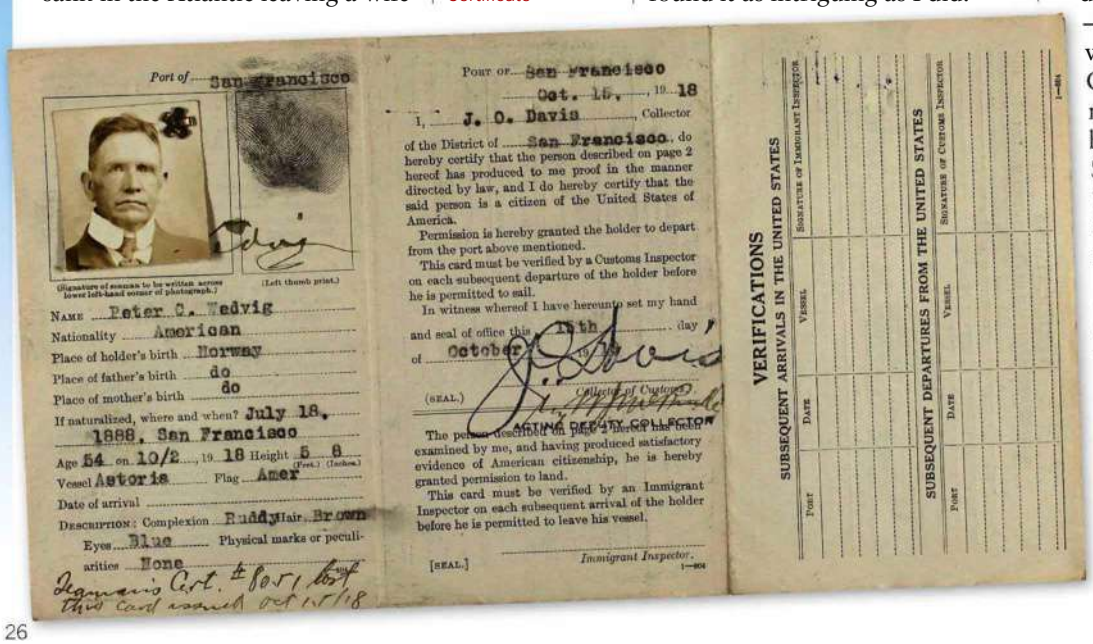
Once she had researched back as far as she could with the census and records of birth, marriage and death, she began trying different avenues. She was puzzled to find Peder in various US records. From what she knew, he was a sailor who had drowned when his ship sank in the Atlantic leaving a wife and young son, Vilhelm August, to mourn him. "The middle name, date of birth and occupation listed in the US records all tallied. It was definitely my Peder. I guessed that he had survived and somehow ended up in the States."

It seems he let his family believe he had gone down with the ship. "He started a new life in America, marrying again and having three more children. I even managed to get in touch with the grandson of the child he left behind, who believed his great grandfather had drowned at sea. I felt terrible telling him this wasn't true, but he found it as intriguing as I did."

They decided to cross America in covered wagons for a new life in sunny California

Peder had settled in California with his new wife, Amanda Ellery. Having exhausted the records on him, Lucy decided to trace Amanda's roots. She was born during an era of massive expansion and migration from the east, not long after the California gold rush.

"So off I went on the research trail again – and Amanda Ellery and her ancestors gave me a fascinating story." Using the US census, Lucy followed the family's journey across the country. Amanda's father was William, born in Massachusetts, and her mother was German-born Rosa. "A married couple with young children, they decided – as did many others at that time – to cross America in covered wagons for a new life in sunny California. Just imagine what it must have been like, and how brave they must have been." Sadly, Amanda spent the last 15 years of her life in Napa State Hospital, a psychiatric institution.



Peder Wedvig's Seaman's Protection Certificate

First Settlers

Lucy followed the Ellery family further back. "They were among the first settlers on the American continent in the mid 1700s, on the East Coast originating from England. They were clearly a well-to-do family whose

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menfolk fought in the American Civil War and the Revolutionary War, went to Harvard, were shipping merchants, became military captains and even had a place named after them: Ellery's Cove in Gloucester, Essex County, Massachusetts. I traced the family back from Amanda six generations to a William Ellery born in 1643 – either in America or Bristol, England.

"That was when I got really excited. Amanda's 3x great grandfather Nathaniel had a brother named Benjamin. I've not yet been able to confirm it from the online records, but I strongly suspect that one of Benjamin's descendants is the William Ellery (1727–1820) who was a Founding Father of America – his signature is on the Declaration of Independence. There's clearly some kind of connection between the two Ellery families."

This was an amazing discovery, but something was still niggling Lucy: what had happened to Petrodine's illegitimate child?

"I looked through all the Norwegian records with no luck. By the early 20th century, the Wedvig family were living in Mosjøen, but there was no sign of an illegitimate grandson. Then, purely by chance, I stumbled across a Wedvig – born in Hastings, Sussex. Family folklore was correct insofar as Petrodine did have a son, Trygve, in 1904 before she married, but he was born in England, not Norway."

Armed with Trygve's birth certificate, Lucy pondered every scenario – had he changed his name, been adopted, died or gone to live with family back in Norway? "When the 1910 census came out for Norway and it listed dates of birth, I researched every Trygve born the month my great great uncle was, without success."

Lucy has uncovered a surprising link to an episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?* from 2010

Celebrity Connection

She gave up and turned to the 1911 census for England and Wales. Hundreds of searches later she did actually find him – in Kent – as "Trigve Urdvig". "He was in an orphanage, the Home for Little Boys in Dartford, which I later found out was featured on *Who Do You Think You Are?* – one of actor Rupert Everett's ancestors had been in the same institution."

Lucy was delighted. "It was a small step forward after so many years, but it did indicate that he kept both of his names, which was a big help. When the 1921 census came out in January 2022, I found him – still at the orphanage." But after that, he disappeared – no marriage, no children, no death.

Years of painstaking searching later, Lucy finally discovered him in the collection 'Passenger Lists Leaving UK 1890–1960' on Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**). Trygve was heading to Cape Town, South Africa, in 1924, albeit listed as "T Urdvig". Did he settle there, marry and have a life, or was it the first step on his next adventure? Lucy doesn't know, but she'll never give up looking.

In fact, she has enjoyed pursuing her globetrotting ancestors so much that she is studying remotely for an MSc in genealogical, palaeographic and heraldic studies at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow (you can find out more about the course at **tinyurl.com/uni-strath-msc-gphs**). "It's just fascinating," she says of her research – particularly the US twist. "It really ties your family history in with world history. I really enjoyed that aspect."

Resources

These resources played a vital role in Lucy's research

National Archives of Norway

w **arkivverket.no/en/find-your-ancestors/tracing-your-ancestry**

This online guide from the national archive Arkivverket will walk you through researching family from Norway. As well as the censuses (see below), there are details about parish registers, *bygdebøker* (village records), property and immigration. Many records can be browsed online.

Norwegian Census Records

w **ancestry.co.uk**

Detailed national censuses were taken in 1801, 1865, 1875, 1891, 1900 and 1910 (there were smaller-scale town censuses too in 1870 and 1885). They are available digitally to members of Ancestry, and via Arkivverket's own website.

Seaman's Protection Certificates

w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61257**

Lucy uncovered the new life of Peder Wedvig in the USA after he supposedly drowned using documents including these certificates, which are on Ancestry (1916–1940). They served as sailor's passports and included place of birth and age, and in some cases photographs of the individuals.

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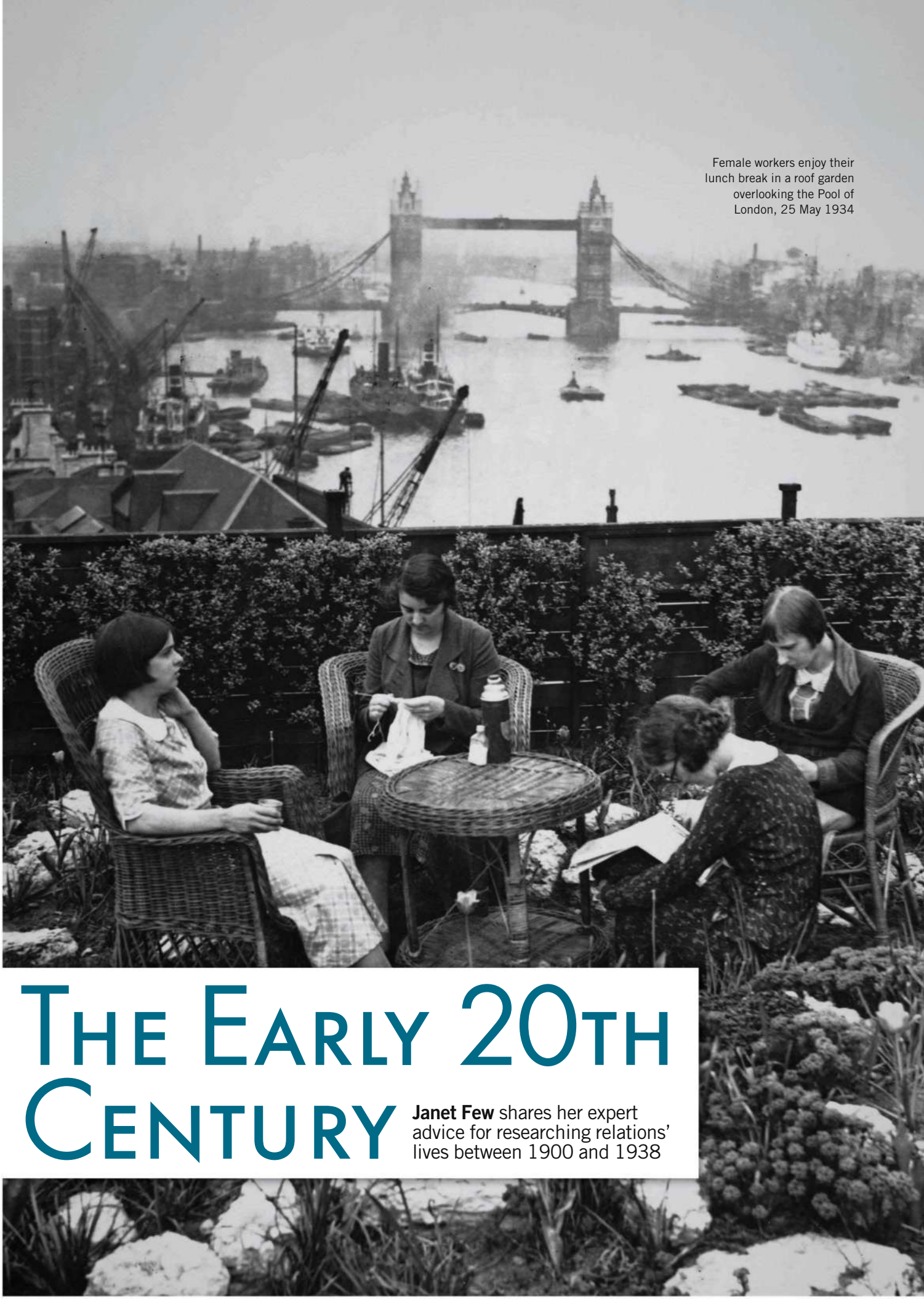

Female workers enjoy their lunch break in a roof garden overlooking the Pool of London, 25 May 1934

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The Early 20th Century

Janet Few shares her expert advice for researching relations' lives between 1900 and 1938

With ancestors who are closer to our own time, there is greater chance of stories, photographs or memorabilia being passed down. In the first four decades of the 20th century, the majority of adults will have benefited from compulsory education, so are more likely to have written letters, postcards or diaries that might survive. Sometimes, because we feel that we know so much already, we neglect to research these more recent family members with the same vigour as we might more distant kin. Twentieth-century research brings with it the difficulties of larger and more mobile populations, as well as records that might be closed to view for privacy reasons, yet there is plenty of scope for investigating their lives. This was a time of enormous social change and as we develop our research, we can set the lives of these individuals against a fascinating backdrop.

For those buried in churchyards, there is a greater likelihood of a gravestone

The years between 1900 and 1938 saw the death of three British monarchs and the abdication of another. Would our forebears have participated in coronation celebrations, or George V's Silver Jubilee, or perhaps they will have been part of annual Empire Day commemorations? In addition whether they were combatants or not, our family's lives would have been dislocated by the First Word War. What impact did

Field Book, 1912

This Valuation Office Survey Field Book is held by The National Archives (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**) in series IR 58. It is also available digitally at TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**)

1 Situation
Monnery Road is located in Islington, North London.

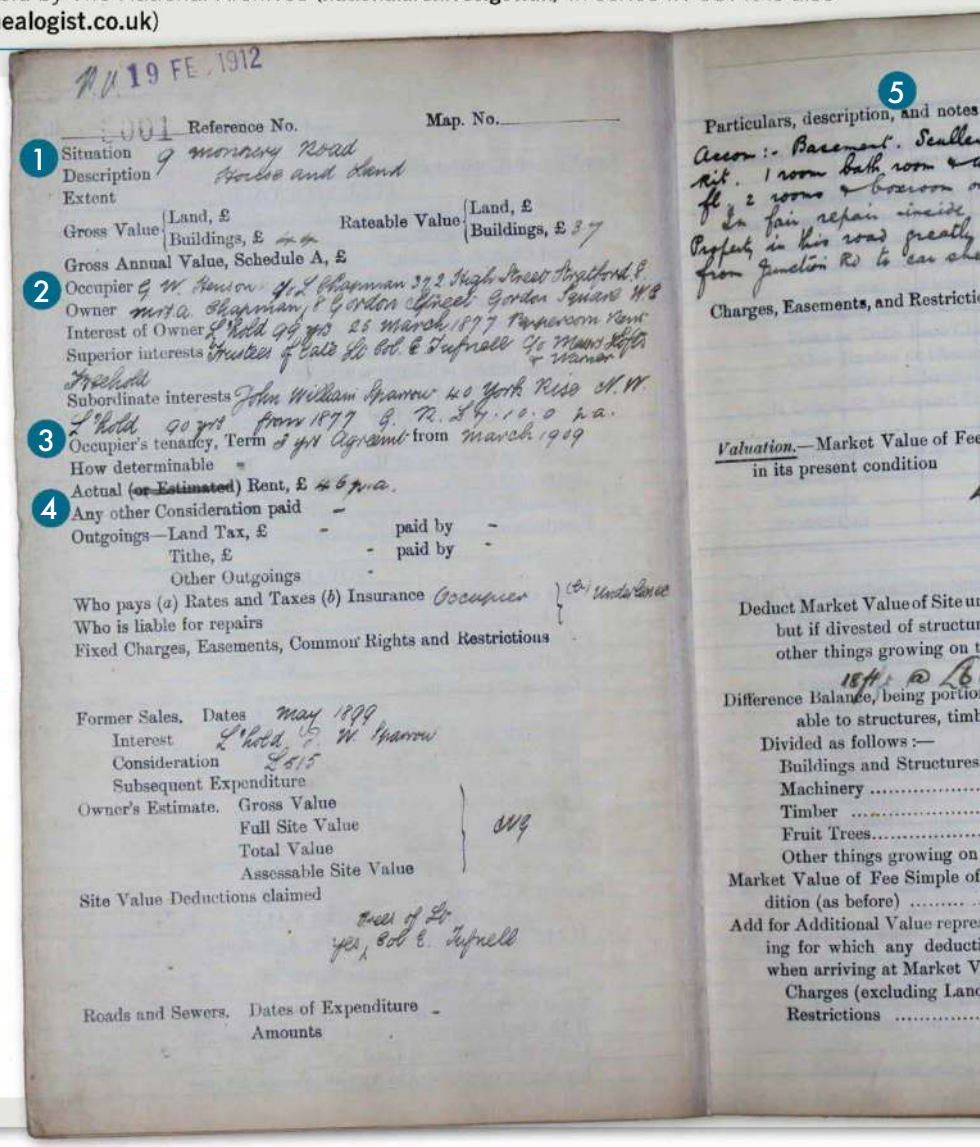
2 Occupier
The name of the occupier(s) and the type of tenure are recorded. The owner's name and address are also given, with details of the owner's interest.

3 Tenancy
The length of the tenancy and the date it began are included in this section; this may be prior to the 20th century.

4 Rent
The rent to be paid and the financial responsibilities of the tenant and landlord for taxes, rates and repairs are summarised here.

5 Particulars
Details of the rooms on each floor of the property and its construction are recorded, sometimes with comments about condition (here, "In fair repair inside and out").

6 Valuation
The valuation of the property sometimes specifies the value of the buildings and any machinery, timber, fruit trees and other crops. With farms, you often get a sketch map and key, indicating where the farmhouse and outbuildings were (see image top right).

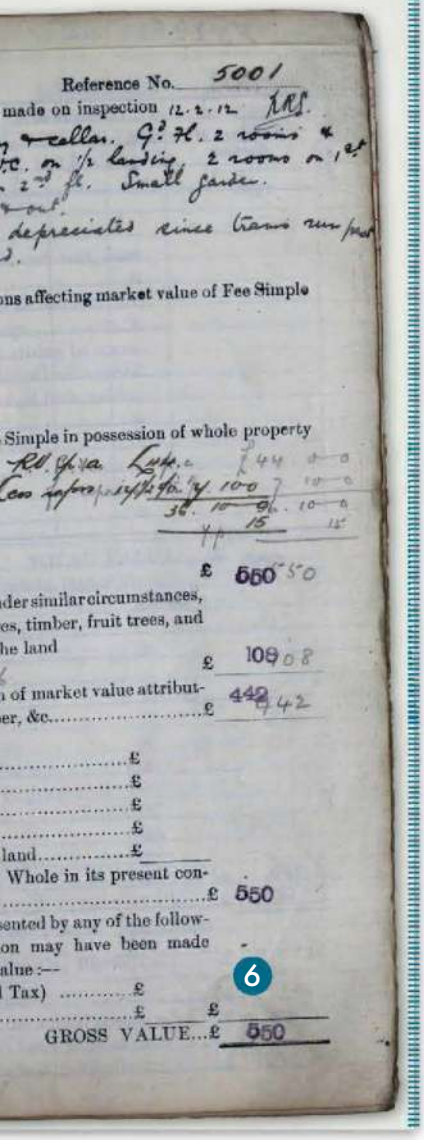


the 1918–1920 flu pandemic have, or the General Strike? Were they 'Bright Young Things' of the 1920s, or did they struggle through the Depression years of the 1930s? Perhaps we have female relatives who were part of the campaign for women's suffrage.

Dramatic Social Change

In many spheres, life in 1938 was very different to that of 1900. There were changes in transport and communications, rising hemlines, new labour-saving devices and a greater social awareness. From 1906 poorer families could receive free school meals, the old age pension was introduced in 1908, the 1911 National Insurance Act made provision for sickness benefits, and the school-leaving age was raised from 12 to 14 in 1918. There was also better healthcare for expectant mothers, and the infant mortality rate dropped from 138:1,000 in 1901, to 53:1,000 by 1941. Men and women who were born at the end of the 1930s could expect to live over a decade longer than their parents did.

Fortunately, many records are available when tracing our early 20th-century ancestors. We can continue to use sources that are familiar from 19th-century research: civil registration records, parish registers, census returns, wills, memorial inscriptions, newspapers and directories for example.



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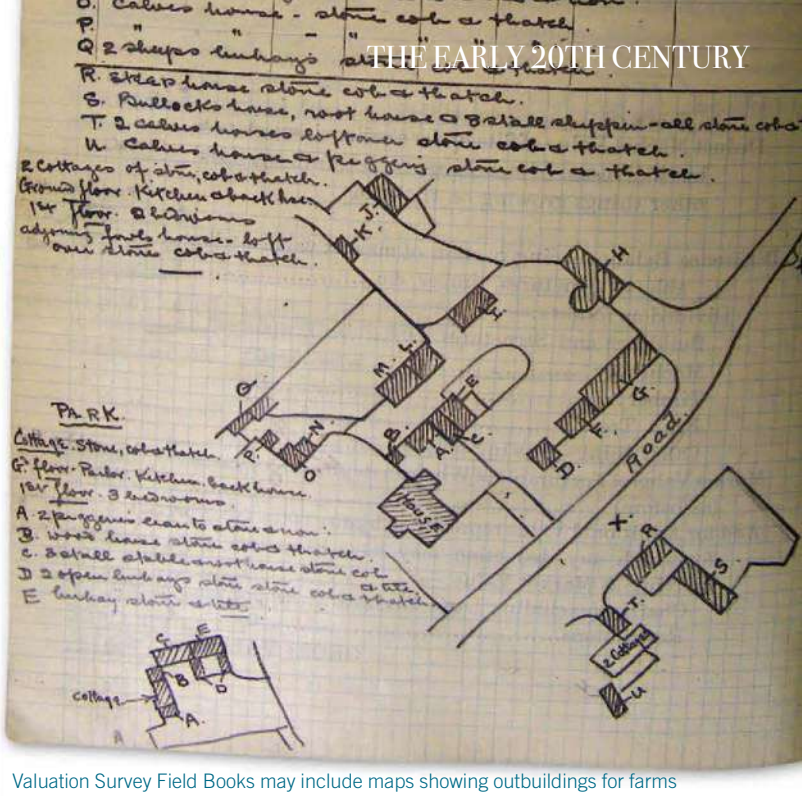


Valuation Survey Field Books may include maps showing outbuildings for farms

The 20th century does bring some changes for 21st-century genealogists, however. An increasing percentage of the population might have their births, marriages and deaths announced in the press, or might leave wills. For those buried in churchyards, there is a greater likelihood of a gravestone. The Church was gradually assuming a lesser role, so we might find more marriages in register offices and more cemetery burials. Cemetery records, usually still retained by the local authority, might give information about who purchased the plot and who shares the burial place. As ▶

Albany Braund 1888–1963

Janet explains how she researched the life of her grandfather

Albany Braund, like so many others, left his rural birthplace for an urban environment in the early 20th century. Few heirlooms have survived, but as his only grandchild I have a handful of photographs and his pocket watch, which was awarded for 45 years' service on the railways.

He appears in the civil registration records and the 20th-century census returns, which track his migration from Cornwall to London. There is no baptism for Albany himself, because he grew up in a Baptist family, who did not practise infant baptism. However, there are baptism records online for his children, with Albany's address and occupation. Also a long run of electoral rolls for Wandsworth are available at Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), and I can use the records of the 1910–1915 Valuation Office Survey to learn more about the various properties that he lived in.

Although I can't find Albany's name on any of the almost 75 million pages in the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**), I can read about railway accidents that he may have witnessed in addition to the opening of the new Waterloo Station, which took place in 1922 while he worked there. The same collection is available to 'Pro' subscribers of Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**).

Albany belonged to the National Union of Railwaymen. Along with many other trade-union records, details of his membership are held by the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick (**warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc**) and his entry is online at Findmypast.

Finally, staff records for the London and South Western Railway are held by The National Archives in Kew (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**). Albany's has been over-stamped to indicate that he took part in the 1926 General Strike.

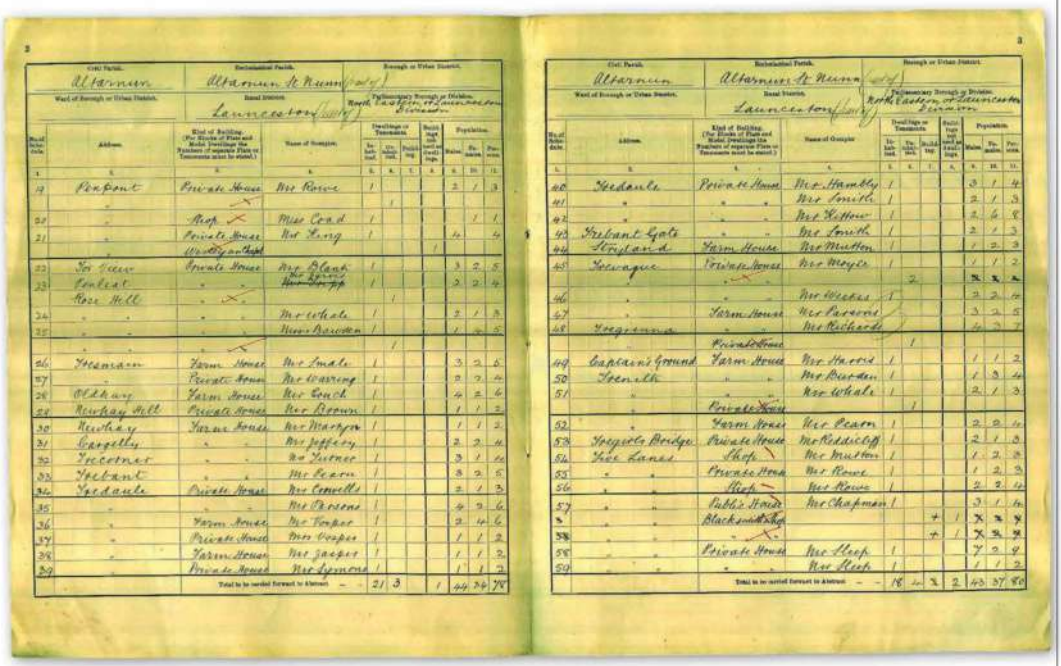
well as contacting local cemeteries, you could try consulting Deceased Online (**deceasedonline.com**) or Find a Grave (**findagrave.com**) for information.

Census Revelations

There are three censuses available to us for early 20th-century research, and both the 1911 and 1921 censuses contain unique elements that might be useful. In 1911 we can learn how long a couple claim to have been married, and there is also information about the number of children born to that marriage and how many have survived. This may allow us to locate hitherto-unknown siblings who had very short lives.

The online images of the 1911 census also provide us with access to the enumerator's book lists. If you have found your relation in the census on Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), these can be found under the 'Extra materials' tab in the Filmstrip controls. Select 'List' from the options that appear. For those using Ancestry, go to the 'UK Census Collection' page at **ancestry.co.uk/search/categories/ukicen** and scroll down to see links to the 1911 summary books for the Channel Islands, England, the Isle of Man, and Wales. The books list the properties that the enumerator had to visit in order to collect the completed schedules and are usually in some kind of logical geographical order, but can also be searched by location. This can be particularly useful for locating properties in rural areas where the occupant has just given the village name as an address. If you are very lucky, the enumerator will have been more thorough and provided a farm name, or, at the least, you may get a better idea of exactly where your family lived from the surrounding properties that have been named.

The 1921 census of England and Wales gives us valuable detail about our ancestors' employers, and is exclusively available online via Findmypast (the 1921 Scottish census is on ScotlandsPeople; **scotlandspeople.gov.uk**). It is possible to search by employer's name only, and potentially discover Grandad's colleagues. In addition, each occupation is annotated with a figure, given in green ink. These occupational codes can reveal more about the nature of your forebears' work. The key to these can be found at **findmypast.co.uk/articles/world-records/1921-census---occupation-codes.**



The 1911 census records online include these summary books which can help you place your ancestor's rural address

Electoral Rolls

Electoral rolls become more useful in the 20th century, as suffrage became universal after 1928. Survival is good, and many are appearing online. In the years before the Second World War, few of our ancestors owned their own home and families

Expert Picks

Janet recommends these often-overlooked collections for researching your relations in the early 20th century

Ancestry

w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61005**

This government record, held by The National Archives (HO 45/24665), has details of more than 1,300 arrests of suffragettes and their supporters, of both sexes.

British Pathé News

w **britishpathe.com**

Here you can view more than 200,000 newsreels (1896–1984) that can be searched by topic, location or name, providing excellent contextual information.

Findmypast

w **bit.ly/fmp-teachers**

This collection of approximately 100,000 people who taught in England and Wales is based on records that are held by the Society of Genealogists in London (**sog.org.uk**).

GETTY IMAGES

A crowd of commuters cross London Bridge as they make their way into the City of London, 1937

might move between rented properties in the same community quite frequently, according to the changes in their income and family size. If you are able to access a series of electoral rolls, you can track a family as they moved from address to address, and watch their children being added to the list as they reached 21.

In the early 20th century there are new records for us to access, including the fascinating Valuation Office Survey of land and property (1910–1915); there are comprehensive guides on the websites of The National Archives at Kew (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/valuation-office-survey-land-value-ownership-1910-1915/**) and National Records of Scotland (NRS; **nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/inland-revenue-survey-maps-and-field-books**). Large-scale Ordnance Survey maps have been annotated to give each property in the country a hereditament number. These can then be used to find the property in the accompanying Field Books, which are in class IR 58 at TNA, or IRS51–87 at NRS. The records for England and Wales are also being made available digitally at TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**). These returns enable us to build up a priceless picture of what our relative's home would have looked like.

The register of stillbirths was introduced in 1926 in England and Wales, and in 1938 in Scotland. Official adoptions started in 1927 in England and Wales, with Scotland following suit in 1930 and Northern Ireland in 1931. Although you cannot search adoption records online, you can request access from the General Register Office; see the guide at **www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/images/CG6_2.pdf**.

Finally there are numerous records relating to First World War service personnel, but these are beyond the scope of this article. There are several guides that will serve as a starting point at **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides**, and many excellent books on the subject.

Electoral rolls become more useful, as suffrage became universal after 1928

TOP TIP!

The casebooks for London's Bethlem Hospital up to 1919 are on Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), and shed some valuable light on attitudes to mental illness at the time.

GETTY IMAGES

RESOURCES

Take your research further

BOOKS

Dating Twentieth Century Photographs
Robert Pols
Federation of Family History Societies, 2005
Pols' book can help you identify the relations who are depicted in family photos.

Tracing Your Twentieth Century Ancestors
Karen Bali
Pen & Sword, 2016
Bali explores the key events and the resulting sources.

WEBSITES

HISTORIC UK
w **tinyurl.com/hist-uk-ec**
This interesting article about childhood in the 1920s and 1930s is by Ellen Castelow.

MAPPING WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
w **mappingwomenssuffrage.org.uk**
This project aims to map all those involved in the fight for women's suffrage in 1911.

MY WESLEYAN METHODISTS
w **tinyurl.com/mywes-mhr**
Here you can find out about the Methodist Historic Roll, containing the names of more than one million donors to the church's Million Guinea Fund (1899–1904).

JANET FEW is a genealogist who runs an online training course about early 20th-century research for Pharos Tutors (**pharostutors.com**)

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A range of websites can help you research old family photographs

OLD PHOTOS

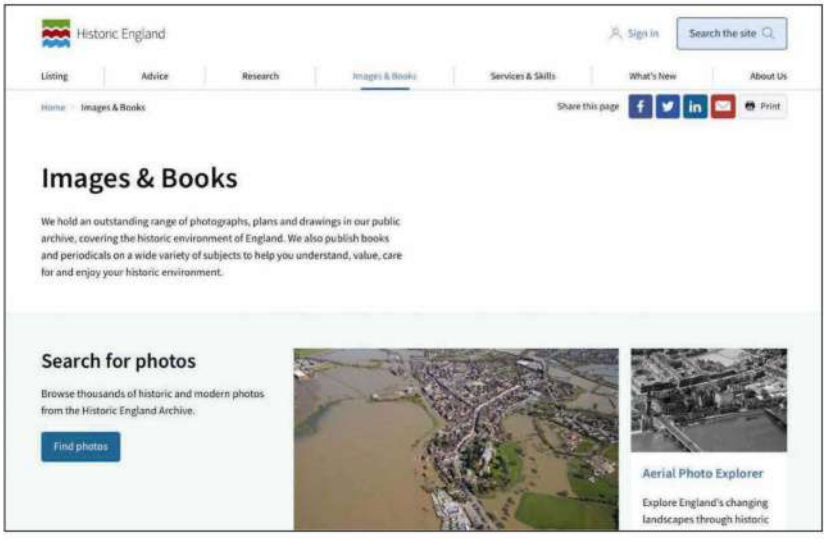
Jonathan Scott reveals how to locate old photographs online – and make sense of your own

As family historians, it's important to investigate local photographic collections for the areas in which we're researching. It's possible you might strike gold and uncover a picture of an ancestor's face, or perhaps track down photographs of their place of work, or the house or street where they lived.

Even if you aren't so lucky, narrowing your search by date can help you find images of places, pastimes and events that can tell you more about the wider community. They can also help you draw conclusions about your family snaps – perhaps a building or landmark that could help you assign a place and date to one of your photographs.

Collections preserved in museums, archives and in private hands are being digitised all the time. Some online libraries allow you to click straight through to high-quality scans, while others use watermarks, or fairly low-resolution previews to encourage you to purchase digital or physical prints. We've also selected websites that can tell you more about photographic processes, or help you research professional photographic studios.

GETTY IMAGES



HISTORIC ENGLAND ARCHIVE

w **historicengland.org.uk/images-books**

The Historic England Archive in Swindon looks after collections useful for researching buildings and landscapes. Testing the search engine using the town where I grew up, Edenbridge in Kent, returned more than 300 results. Many of these hits are simple catalogue descriptions, but you can tick a box to show "Only records with online images". Also, the 'England's Places' search engine allows you to explore the Architectural 'Red Box Collection'. This was begun in 1941 to document Britain's built heritage, especially buildings threatened or damaged by bombing during the Second World War. You can search by city, town or village, or browse major towns and cities. Clicking 'Liverpool', for example, leads to 2,708 images kept within 38 boxes.

BEST WEBSITES

LONDON PICTURE ARCHIVE

w **londonpicturearchive.org.uk**

This is your window to more than 250,000 images held by the London Metropolitan Archives and the Guildhall Art Gallery. Alongside maps, paintings, posters and prints, you'll find images of Victorian London; the Cross and Tibbs series, where police photographers Arthur Cross and Fred Tibbs captured Second World War damage to the City of London; and the enormous London County Council Photograph Library. You have the usual search options, alongside the ability to narrow results by excluding keywords, or searching within particular collections. Galleries include '1920s London: Birth of the Modern City', 'Children's Homes' and 'Inns, Taverns and Public Houses'.

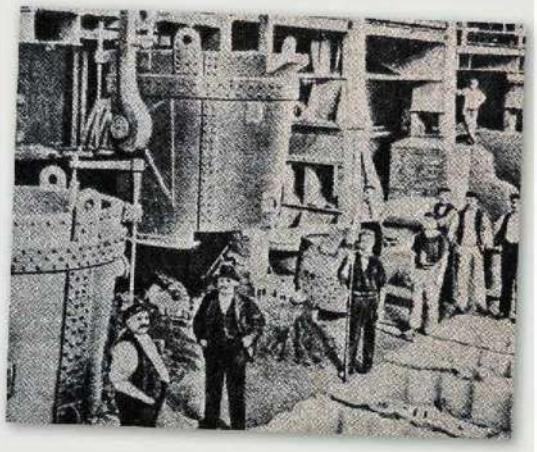
VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

w **vam.ac.uk/articles/photographic-processes**

As the magazine's portrait specialist Jayne Shrimpton will tell you (see page 37), you can deduce a lot about a photograph, including its approximate date, from the size and format. The daguerreotype was the first widespread photographic process, which produced prints on distinctive silvery copper plate. This single page from the V&A's website is an alphabetical list of processes used over time. You'll come across terms such as albumen and autochrome, the startlingly clear Woodburytype, and the ancestor of all modern photography, the calotype, invented in 1841. You can then follow links to the V&A Collections page, where you can trawl photographs and prints.

EXPERT'S CHOICE

Dr Alison Toplis is the author of *The Hidden History of the Smock Frock*



Siemens open-hearth furnaces at shipbuilding company Vickers Sons and Maxim's in Barrow-in-Furness, c1904

As a dress and textile historian, I often use old photographs to study the clothing and fashion that they captured. Researching fashions can not only help you date images of your family, but also help you to draw conclusions about their status, occupations and pastimes. It's well worth visiting local image libraries, many of which are online, in places where your relatives lived. You will learn more about their community and may even find images of their street, and – you never know – photographs of your relatives.

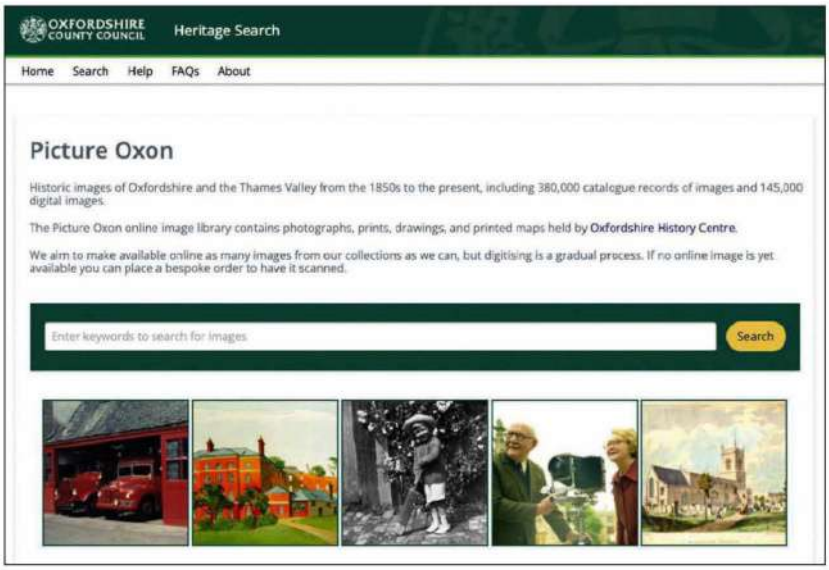
A wonderful example is the Sankey Photography Archive (**sankeyphotoarchive.uk**) containing more than 10,000 images from Barrow-in-Furness and Cumbria. The Sankeys were a family of photographers who, from around 1900, captured the landscape, as well as the lives and work of locals, right up until the 1970s.

In 2018 this important collection was given to Cumbria Archives, and a Heritage Lottery Funded project was launched to preserve, repackage, digitise and catalogue the nitrate and glass negatives and complete photograph albums, as well as prints and postcards.

You can search by name or keyword, and there are a number of themed galleries, for example shop fronts, urban workers and rural workers, and the fascinating 'Now and Then' focused on specific locations. The quality of the photography is excellent and the images are scanned at high resolution, so you can browse through original albums page by page, zooming in to study the cap badge of a seated constable, for instance, or other inscriptions.

Note that although the images are catalogued, the descriptive information is sometimes very brief, so perseverance is required if you are searching for a specific relation. It is, however, a great source for looking at the past lives of ordinary people.

GETTY IMAGES



PICTURE OXON

w **heritagesearch.oxfordshire.gov.uk/images**

Most archive, museum and library services will have some kind of online image library. This example reproduces photographs, drawings, maps and prints held by the Oxfordshire History Centre. In total it has about 380,000 catalogue records of images, as well as 145,000 digital images. A search by the surname Warren returns 326 results, from Warren Farmhouse, to Warren Hospital in Abingdon, to newspaper cuttings, including a biographical piece on a delivery driver named John Warren that appeared in the *Oxford Mail & Times* in 1957. You can order digital copies costing £2–13 depending on size and format.

PHOTOGRAPHERS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

w **cartedevisite.co.uk**

The name of a studio on the back of a print can help you ascribe a rough date. This website focuses on 1840–1940, and while there's some interesting free content, particularly under the 'Biographies' and 'Dating Old Photographs' sections, the database of thousands of photographers is now a simple list of names – charges apply if you wish to know more. Meanwhile the unconnected website photoLondon has details of 9,000 photographers from 1841–1901: **photolondon.org.uk/#/**. And you can always search the historical directories on Special Collections Online (**specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4**).

Go Further

More websites you can't afford to miss

BOROUGH PHOTOS

w **https://boroughphotos.org**

Search images in 12 London borough archives.

CAPITAL COLLECTIONS

w **www.capitalcollections.org.uk**

This is the online image library for Edinburgh Libraries and Museums and Galleries. Visit **www.mitchelllibrary.org/virtualmitchell** for Glasgow.

FRANCIS FRITH

w **francisfrith.com/uk**

Here you can explore photographs of towns and villages dating from 1860–1970.

JAYNE SHRIMPTON

w **jayneshrimpton.co.uk/blog**

Jayne's blog includes articles explaining how to date family photographs from changing fashions.

LEODIS

w **www.leodis.net**

This photographic archive of Leeds is based on collections looked after by Leeds libraries.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

w **library.wales/discover-learn/digital-exhibitions/photographs**

Learn about the NLW's collections via themed galleries. Also try **peoplescollection.wales**.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

w **nidirect.gov.uk/articles/image-gallery**

PRONI's website includes a link to its photostream on Flickr (**flickr.com**).

SUSSEX PHOTOHISTORY

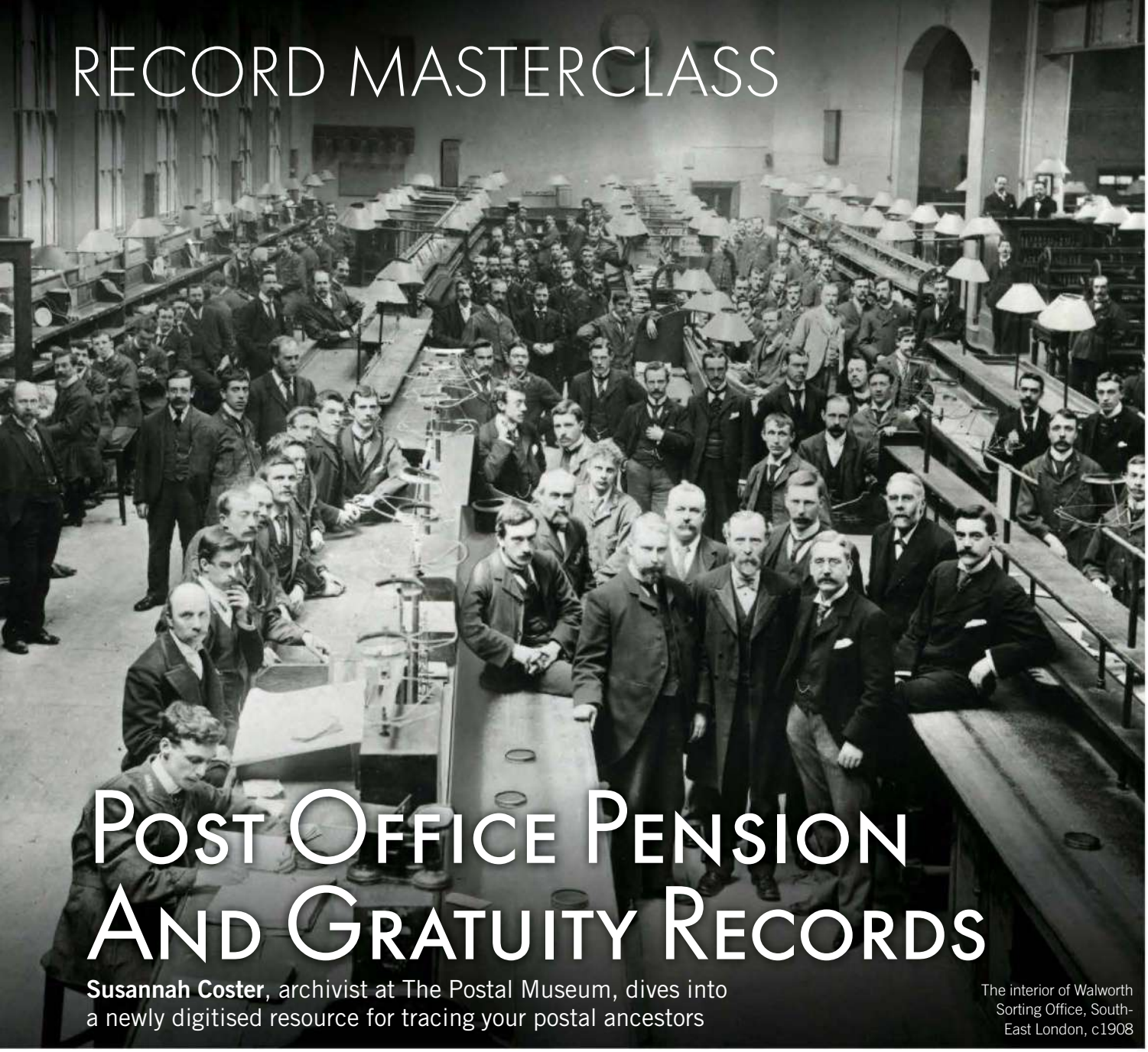
w **photohistory-sussex.co.uk**

This website focuses on photographers who were active during Victorian and Edwardian times.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

w **blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/how-to-date-family-photographs**

This TNA blog provides techniques for dating old photos. You can find out about the archive's own holdings at **tinyurl.com/tna-guide-photos**.



Post Office Pension And Gratuity Records

Susannah Coster, archivist at The Postal Museum, dives into a newly digitised resource for tracing your postal ancestors

The interior of Walworth Sorting Office, South-East London, c1908

The Post Office was one of the largest employers in the UK in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the pension and gratuity records of former staff, covering 1686–1970, can be a treasure trove of information for family history. The records are held in the Royal Mail Archive at The Postal Museum, Central London, and cover the whole of the UK and, until 1920, Ireland as well.

Up until 1969 the Post Office was a government department and its 'established' staff were civil servants. They worked in the rough equivalent of today's permanent roles, and received sick pay and pension. 'Unestablished' staff worked in the rough equivalent of today's casual roles, frequently part-time. Initially, they received no sick pay or pension, although this began to change towards the end of the 19th century.

Post Office staff had to work for 10 years before they were eligible for a pension

Marriage Gratuities

Occasionally, unestablished staff received a 'gratuity' (a one-off payment) when they retired. Gratuities were also sometimes paid to staff who were unable to work due to illness or injury. A 'marriage gratuity' was paid to women, who from 1876 to 1946 had to leave the Post Office when they got married. This was due to the 'marriage bar' that applied to all female civil servants. If a woman had worked for at least six years, she received one month's salary for every year worked, up to a maximum of 12 years. In the sad event that a member of staff died while on duty, a 'death gratuity' was paid to their dependents.

The pension and gratuity records were created by the Post Office to keep track of payments made to staff. For many years this information was also sent to the Treasury, which paid the pensions. Many of the pension records have survived. Not all staff received pensions or gratuities, so not all employees are represented. Post Office staff had to work for 10 years before they were eligible for a pension. If they left the Post Office before retirement then they do not appear in the pension ▶

ROYAL MAIL GROUP, COURTESY OF THE POSTAL MUSEUM

Pension Record, 1938

This record of George Henry Rawlings' pension is held by The Postal Museum (**postalmuseum.org**) and available on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**)

1 Roles This section lists the jobs that George held, the promotion dates and the salaries.

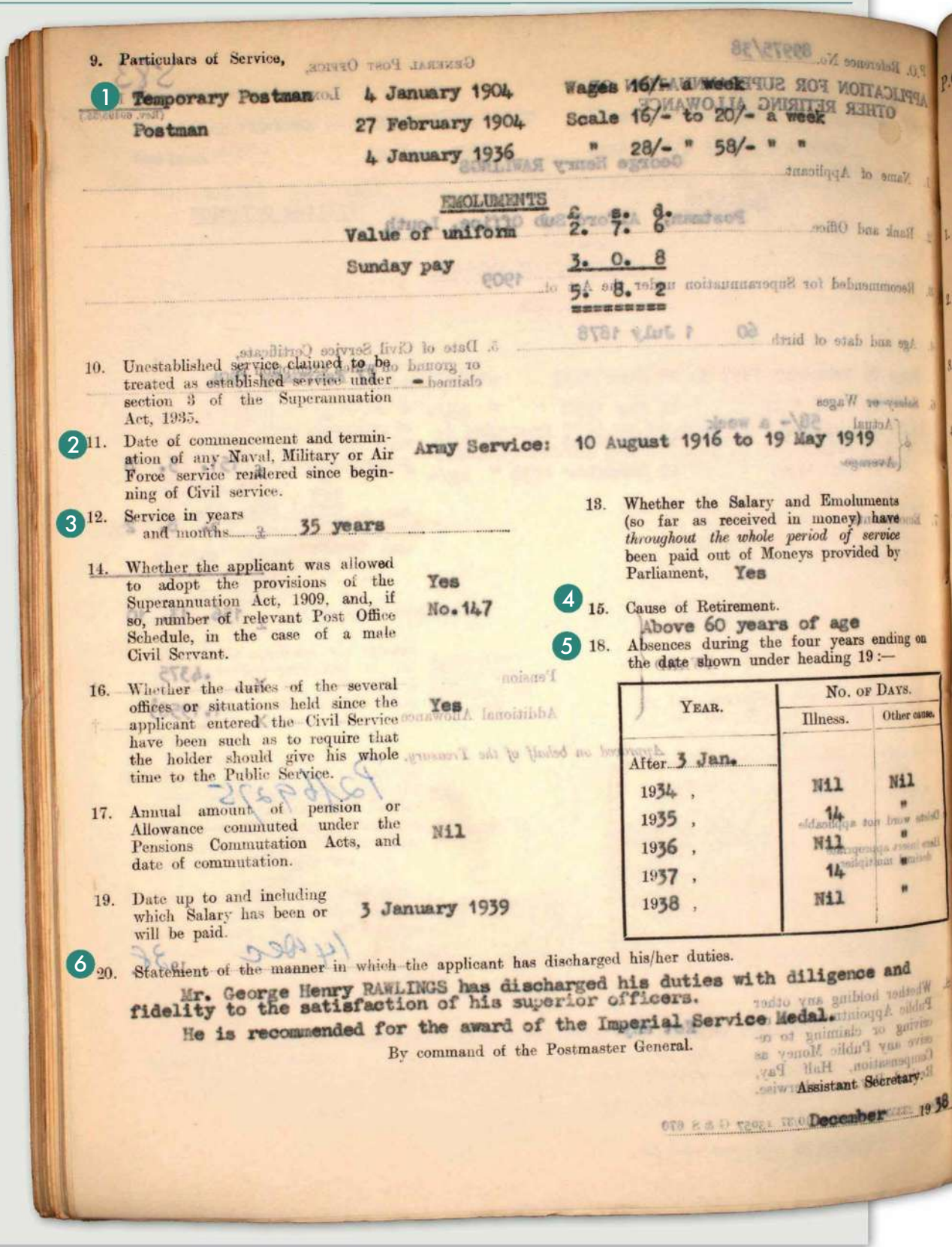
2 Military Service The employee's military service (in George's case the Army) is recorded. The dates also show when they were not working for the Post Office.

3 Service Length The length of service is given.

4 Cause The cause of retirement is noted, for example reaching retirement age (60 at that time), illness or injury.

5 Absences The number of days off work in the years leading up to retirement is given, and the reasons for those absences.

6 Conduct The most common statement is shown here. George's full name is given, repeated from the previous page where his date of birth (1 July 1878) and office (Alford Sub Office, Louth, Lincolnshire) are also recorded.



9. Particulars of Service,

1 Temporary Postman — 4 January 1904 — Wages 16/- a week
Postman — 27 February 1904 — Scale 16/- to 20/- a week
4 January 1936 — " 28/- " 58/- " "

EMOLUMENTS

	£	s.	d.
Value of uniform	2.	7.	6
Sunday pay	3.	0.	8
	5.	8.	2

10. Unestablished service claimed to be treated as established service under section 3 of the Superannuation Act, 1935. —

2 11. Date of commencement and termination of any Naval, Military or Air Force service rendered since beginning of Civil service. Army Service: 10 August 1916 to 19 May 1919

3 12. Service in years and months 3 35 years

13. Whether the Salary and Emoluments (so far as received in money) have *throughout the whole period of service* been paid out of Moneys provided by Parliament, Yes

14. Whether the applicant was allowed to adopt the provisions of the Superannuation Act, 1909, and, if so, number of relevant Post Office Schedule, in the case of a male Civil Servant. Yes No. 147

4 15. Cause of Retirement. Above 60 years of age

5 18. Absences during the four years ending on the date shown under heading 19 :—

Year.	No. of Days. Illness.	Other cause.
After 3 Jan.		
1934 ,	Nil	Nil
1935 ,	14	"
1936 ,	Nil	"
1937 ,	14	"
1938 ,	Nil	"

16. Whether the duties of the several offices or situations held since the applicant entered the Civil Service have been such as to require that the holder should give his whole time to the Public Service. Yes

17. Annual amount of pension or Allowance commuted under the Pensions Commutation Acts, and date of commutation. Nil

19. Date up to and including which Salary has been or will be paid. 3 January 1939

6 20. Statement of the manner in which the applicant has discharged his/her duties.

Mr. George Henry RAWLINGS has discharged his duties with diligence and fidelity to the satisfaction of his superior officers.
He is recommended for the award of the Imperial Service Medal.

By command of the Postmaster General.

Assistant Secretary.

December 1938

Sorters at one of the Post Office's London properties use rollerskates to speed up the transfer of parcels to vans, c1914

records. The earlier pension and gratuity records usually only cover senior staff. However, following the 1859 Superannuation Act all staff received a pension, provided they were eligible.

Some staff only appear in the pension indexes or gratuity registers, but fortunately for many the full pension record has survived. The pension records follow a standard format that varies in different periods. The earlier records are all handwritten. Then a preprinted superannuation form was introduced in 1860, which was filled out by hand and later typewritten.

The records generally give some combination of the following information: the person's name, age at retirement, date they retired, length of service, job title, job location, final salary, and how much their pension was. Some records also say how many days' sick leave they took in the years leading up to retirement. Some records include a date of birth, but never home addresses.

Sometimes there are additional comments, giving an insight into the person's life

Employees' Conduct

Sometimes there are additional comments, giving an insight into the person's life. They may record that they were reprimanded for fighting in the sorting office, or that they were known to drink heavily. If a member of staff had received a serious reprimand then it might affect how much pension they received. However, the most typical comment is a commendation for good service, saying that the employee "has discharged his/her duties with diligence and fidelity to the satisfaction of his/her superior officers".

Before searching the pension and gratuity records, gather any information you already have about your ancestor. This includes their full name, dates of birth and death, the area where they lived, and if they were a woman the date of her marriage. You can use these dates to estimate where in the records you might find your ancestor, for example when they turned 60, got married (if they were a woman) or died while on duty.

Some of these records were added to Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) in January, in the collection 'UK, Royal Mail Pension and Gratuity Records, 1860–1970': **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62452**. These records are also available to view in person at the Royal Mail Archive at The Postal Museum, as well as the pre-1860 records: **postalmuseum.org/collections/the-archive**. The archive also offers a paid family history research service, with fees starting at £6 per person searched.

TOP TIP!

Most Post Office staff retired at the age of 60. However, there are exceptions, so you may need to search at least five years either side of the date they actually turned 60.

SUSANNAH COSTER is an archivist at The Postal Museum, where she also advises family historians

Resources

Take your research further

BOOK

Masters of the Post
Duncan Campbell-Smith
Penguin, 2012
A digitised version of this authorised history of Royal Mail can be freely borrowed from the Internet Archive (**tinyurl.com/arch-mop**).

MUSEUM

THE POSTAL MUSEUM
a **15–20 Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL**
t 0300 030 0700
e *bookings@postalmuseum.org*
w **postalmuseum.org**
Explore the history of the UK's postal service, and the invaluable work of its staff.

WEBSITE

ANCESTRY
w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1933**
Ancestry also has this very useful collection 'UK, Postal Service Appointment Books, 1737–1969'.

GETTY IMAGES

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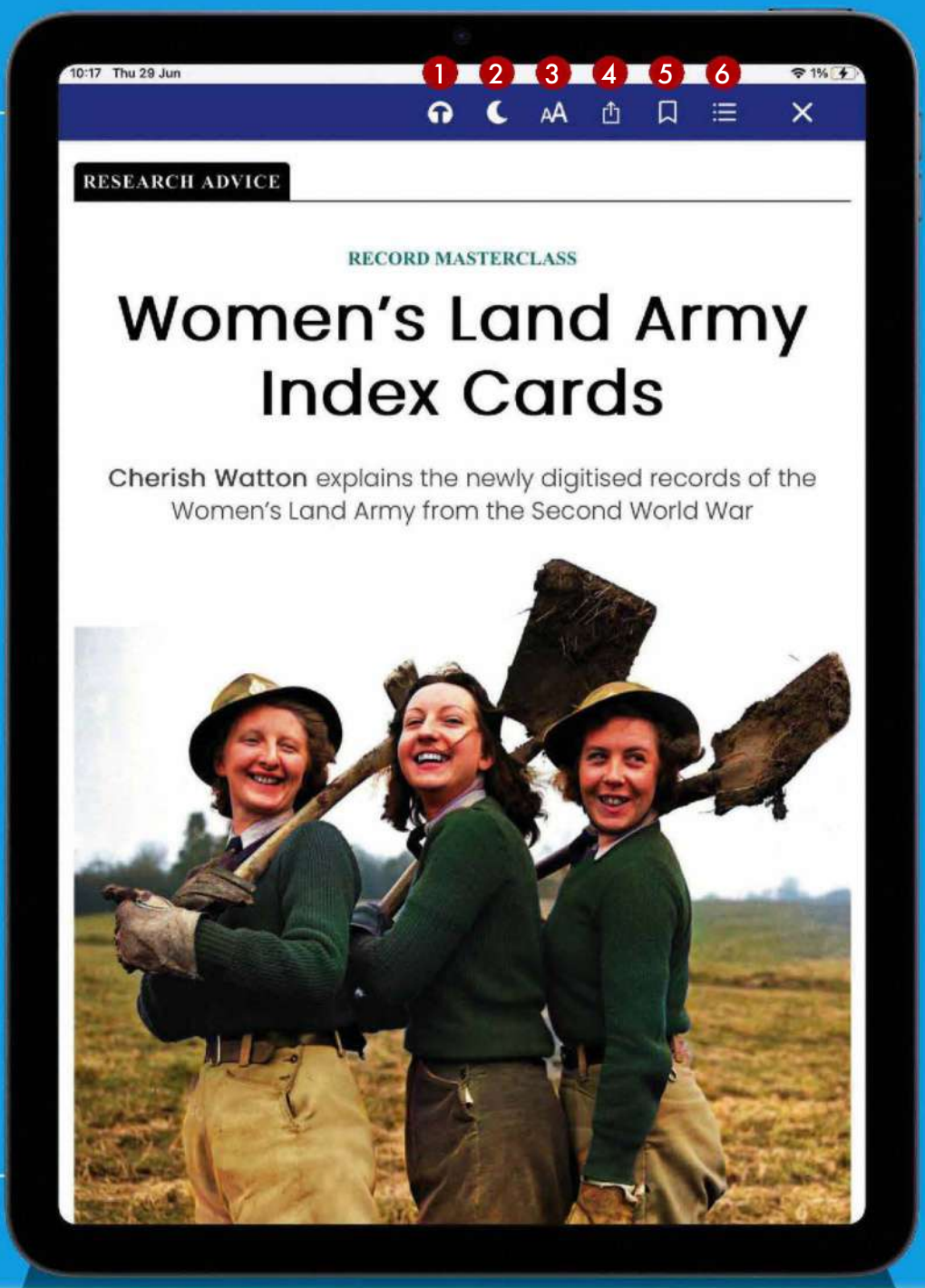

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Q&A

Our team of experts offers tips and inspiration Edited By Claire Vaughan

Dave Annal is a genealogist, author and lecturer

Michelle Higgs is a writer who specialises in social history and family history

Debbie Kennett is the author of *DNA and Social Networking*

Roger Kershaw is migration records specialist at The National Archives

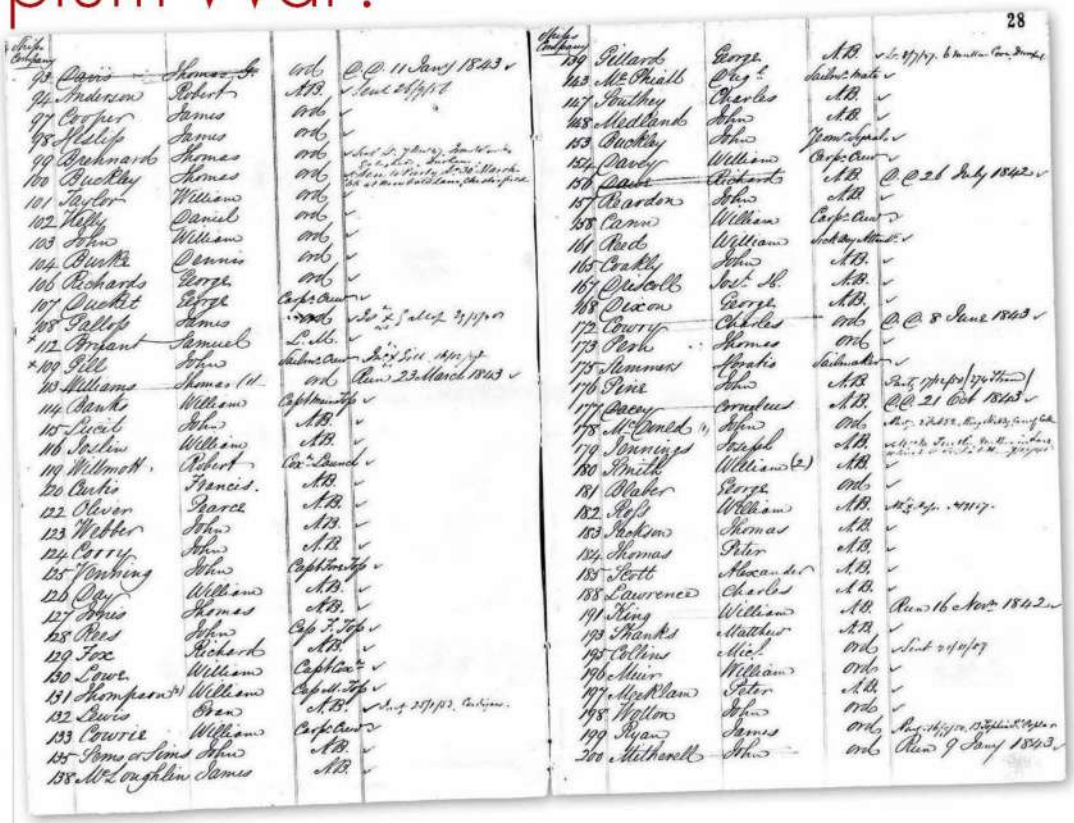
Jayne Shrimpton is a professional dress historian and portrait specialist

Phil Tomaselli is a military family history expert and author

Simon Wills is a genealogist and wrote *Tracing Your Seafaring Ancestors*

Was Thomas Davis involved in the First Opium War?

Thomas Davis is listed at the top of this page of the naval medal roll



Q Thomas Davis (baptised in 1822, Bristol) was the brother of my 4x great grandmother, Susannah Davis. His middle name may have been Gardener. Their parents were Thomas Davis and Emma (née Racket).

Susannah was convicted of larceny in 1843 and in one related record she mentions that Thomas junior is in China, and in another that he is on board the *Belleisle*. I believe he was involved in the First China War, and have found his name on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) in a list of naval medals awarded on 21 July 1842. However, it is crossed out with "DD [discharged dead] 11 January 1843" beside it. I can't find his name in the death indexes, nor in any other navy records online.

Christine Riding

A HMS *Belleisle* went to China as a troopship during the First Opium War (1839–1842). The deployment dates match your evidence for Thomas serving in China. Furthermore, the medal roll of men employed on naval vessels during the conflict (ADM 171/12) can be downloaded from the website of The National Archives (TNA) via its online catalogue Discovery: **discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C974982**. This identifies every individual on each ship that went to China, with the ships listed in alphabetical order. There is one Thomas Davis on *Belleisle* – and it's your man who died in 1843. He was an ordinary seaman.

There were no service records for naval ratings at this date, and naval deaths were often not recorded for the General Register Office (GRO) either. Admiralty sources that could reveal more about his death haven't been digitised, so you will need to visit TNA or hire a researcher to look at paper records from the period.

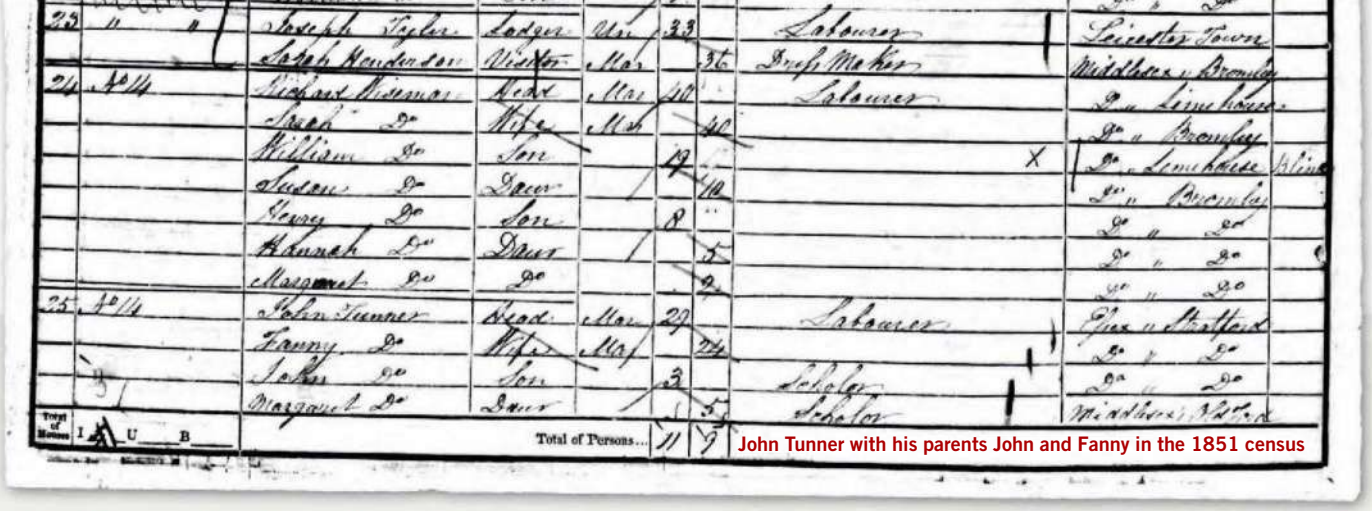
In particular, a ship's muster was a 'roll call' of everyone on board, and invariably recorded deaths. It also often noted a man's age, place of birth and the previous ship he served upon. The muster for *Belleisle* for 1843 is in either ADM 38/242 or ADM 38/7621. It may include a note on Thomas' cause of death. If not, the ship's log for the appropriate date may do so but will certainly specify its location (ADM 53/237).

Unfortunately, Thomas does not seem to have left a naval will (ADM 48) nor to have allocated his wages to be sent home to any next of kin (ADM 27).

Simon Wills

HAVE YOU HIT A BRICK WALL? Please email your questions or family photographs to the following address: **wdytyaquestions@ourmedia.co.uk**

If selected, your query will be answered on these pages. Please note that we receive a large volume of correspondence each month, and cannot reply to each message individually. You are more likely to receive a response if you keep the question and background information concise (no more than 150 words), with a clear goal of enquiry.



John Tunner with his parents John and Fanny in the 1851 census

Why did John Ford keep changing his name?

Q One of the big mysteries of my family is, why did my paternal great grandfather keep changing his surname? John Ford was born in 1847 to John Ford and Jane Hudson in Stratford, West Ham, Essex. He married Mary Selina Smith in 1872 as John Forde. The couple's children were all born as Fords, but the family also used the name Turner on some records. John died in 1881 and his widow used Ford in the 1891 census, but in 1893 had an illegitimate son, Philip Turner. The family called themselves Turner thereafter.
Barbara Barnes

A As family historians, we attach a great deal of importance to our ancestors' surnames. So it can be a shock to learn that these names were sometimes less than stable.

It seems your forebear had two surnames (Ford and Turner) at his disposal. Why he chose to use both is difficult to answer, but it wasn't uncommon, and such aliases could be passed down over many generations.

I've found your great grandfather in the 1851 census. He was three years old, living at 14 Bow Common (ie Bow Common Lane) with his parents, John and Fanny Tunner (sic). Why his mother (Jane) should be listed as Fanny is difficult to say, but this must be them. One of your John Ford's sisters (Caroline) died at an address in Bow Common Lane in August 1850, and another (Eliza) was born there in November 1851. The ages and birthplace of John and his parents are all good matches with the 1861 census.

John's father also used the names interchangeably. Having married as John Ford in 1843, he appears in the 1851 census as Tunner, in 1861 as Ford, in 1871 as Turner and then he dies in 1881 as John Ford. His widow is in the 1881 census afterwards as Jane Turner. The children were all registered under Ford.

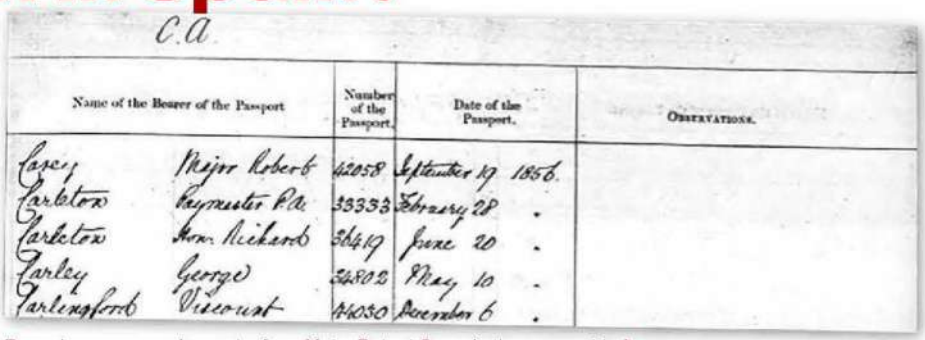
Your challenge now is to uncover the origins of the Ford/Turner alias. And it may be several generations back.
Dave Annal

Why were some of my ancestor's children born in Spain?

Q Robert Carey, a machine maker, married Elizabeth Whyte in Carmylie, Angus, in 1849 and they had three children in Dundee up to 1856. They are not on the 1861 census.

On the 1871 census they are in Dundee, him a machine fitter, with three more children born in Spain, and one in Arbroath. The birth of only one of those born in Spain was registered at the consulate in Bilbao.

Why was the family in Spain? Was it related to the Bilbao–Tudela railway?
Jim Barton



Name of the Bearer of the Passport		Number of the Passport.	Date of the Passport.	Observations.
Carey	Major Robert	42058	September 19 1856.	
Carleton	Paymaster R.A.	33333	February 28	.
Carleton	Hon. Richard	36419	June 20	.
Carley	George	24802	May 10	.
Carlingford	Viscount	44030	December 6	.

Roger has uncovered an entry for a Major Robert Carey in the passport index

A I checked FamilySearch (**familysearch.org**), but couldn't find any reference to parish records for an English or Scottish church in Bilbao at that time. I also consulted the Foreign Office index for Spain (FO 605/210) at The National Archives (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk**), but could find no reference to your forebear. His migration may well have been to do with the Tudela–Bilbao railway, since this was constructed between 1857 and 1863 when he was in Bilbao and a lot of the best, most skilled engineers were Scottish. It is possible that records relating to Robert survive in the National Archives of Spain, *Archivo Histórico Nacional* (**cvc.cervantes.es/obref/arnac/nacional/**). If your relation was ever involved in the construction of railways in the UK, then it's worth consulting TNA's online research guide at **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/railway-workers/**.

I'm afraid passenger lists similarly don't survive for his journey to and from Spain, but again the National Archives of Spain may have a record of his arrival.

Finally, I did manage to find an entry for a Major Robert Carey in the passport index at TNA in FO 611/6. The passport, numbered 42058, was issued on 19 September 1856, which coincides with the period your ancestor emigrated. However, we have no way of knowing if this is the same man because passports weren't compulsory for travel overseas until the First World War and the register entry in FO 610/12 is scant on information, only providing Carey's destination as "Continent", the cost of the passport, 7s 6d, and who recommended him – a Mr Cox.
Roger Kershaw

Picture Analysis

Can you help me date this photograph?

Q We are struggling to identify this ancestor from my father's side of the family – even knowing the location of the studio hasn't helped so far. Are you able to suggest a possible date, and a likely reason why such a photo was taken?
Christine Greene

A Few of our Victorian forebears owned their own camera equipment, so when they wanted a portrait photograph to record a special occasion they commissioned a professional. Between the 1860s and early 1900s, the mass-produced card-mounted photograph called a *carte de visite* (CDV) made this possible for many ordinary working people. This looks to be a classic example measuring about 2½ inches × 4 inches. Typically your ancestor would have donned his 'Sunday best' clothes and visited a studio near his home or place of work. The details on the printed mount here demonstrate a close connection to the industrial town of Bilston, Wolverhampton, historically located in Staffordshire.

Millions of CDVs survive in family archives today, and can be dated using various methods: researching the studio operational dates; dating the style of card mount; and identifying visual clues – especially fashion details. Comprehensive business data for "T Legge" is not freely available online, but all other evidence indicates a date in the early to mid-1880s, so consult the 1881 census for possible candidates. The sitter appears to be in his 20s or early 30s, making his probable birth year broadly late 1840s to early to mid-1860s.
Jayne Shrimpton

1 CARD MOUNT
The ornate design of the reverse of the card mount features large decorated capital letters, several different fonts, slanting central text and delicate scrolling ornamentation, and is typical of the early to mid-1880s.

2 OCCASION
This young ancestor could be celebrating a milestone birthday, such as his 21st or 30th; alternatively he may have recently moved to Bilton, be about to depart, or was starting a new job.

3 HAIRSTYLE
His hair, cut short at the sides, left longer on top, is relatively youthful and fashionable for the time.

4 FACIAL HAIR
Many adult men wore a beard and moustache during the early to mid-1880s, whether full and bushy or short and wispy, as here.

5 JACKET
During the early to mid-1880s, the cut of men's suits was moderate to well-fitted, a helpful dating clue for family historians. The jacket fastened high at the neck and featured small, neat lapels.

6 SUIT
His respectable tailored lounge suit was commonly worn as 'Sunday best' and at work by the average white-collar working man, his stiff bowler hat the usual accompanying headwear.

Why was Henry in prison?

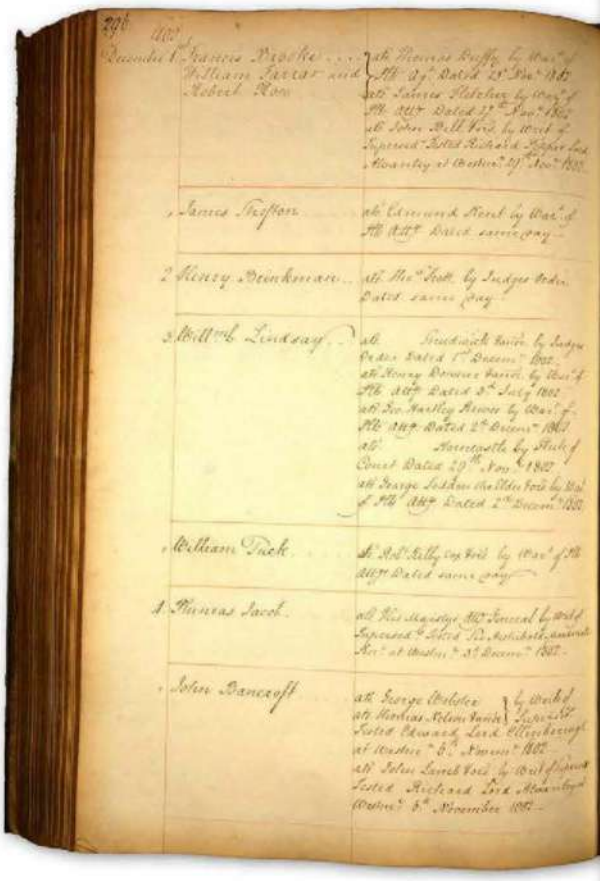
Q I believe I have found a document on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) that shows my ancestor, Henry Brinkman, being released from Fleet Prison in 1802. He was born in either 1787 or 1790, so he would have been 12 or 15 at the time. What was the Fleet Prison, and why would Henry have been imprisoned so young?
Michael Brinkman

A The Fleet Prison was one of London's prisons for insolvent debtors and bankrupts, not a criminal prison. If Henry was 12 or 15, it's unlikely that the record you've found relates to him because he would usually still be apprenticed at that age without his own money to rack up debts. Insolvent debtors were individuals who could not pay their debts, while bankrupts were tradespeople.

As late as 1827, anyone owing £2 or more could be imprisoned; in that year, the limit was raised to £20. Debtors were sent to prison indefinitely by their creditors until they could pay, or an agreement was reached to make instalment payments. Debtors' prisons were private enterprises, and debtors had to pay for their room, food and drink, clothing and bedding. The poorest had the worst living quarters, but they were entitled to a food allowance.

There's very little information in the register you found. Henry Brinkman was discharged on 1 December 1802, "ats. [at the suit of] Thomas Scott by Judge's Order dated same day". This usually meant that the debt was paid off, by the debtor; relatives or friends; or a charity.

Notices about bankrupts and debtors often appeared in local newspapers and the *Gazette* (**thegazette.co.uk**), but I have found no mention of Henry Brinkman. To establish whether he is your ancestor, you would need to check the prison's Commitment Books, which would record his admittance and details of his debts. They are at The National Archives (TNA) in series PRIS 1 but not digitised, and TNA has created a guide to researching debtors and bankrupts at **tinyurl.com/tna-guide-debtors**.
Michelle Higgs



Is the Henry Brinkman recorded here Michael's ancestor?

TOP TIP **Be careful when assigning a record to an ancestor just because the name matches. Even relatively unusual names are rarely unique. Always check birth records to see whether there are other possible candidates with the same name.**

Has DNA helped to find my 3x great grandparents?

Q My great great grandmother was Mary Ann Fryer (born c1831). I have been unable to find her marriage to my great great grandfather, William Kedge, to confirm her father's name. The censuses record her as born in Foulsham or Attlebridge – both in Norfolk. The only possible baptism I can find is in Twyford, near Foulsham, in 1827, for a Mary Frier, the daughter of Robert and Elizabeth Frier.

In 1841 *(pictured)*, Robert and Elizabeth are living in Foulsham with six children, including Mary, aged 15.

Myself, my brother and three second cousins have done DNA tests; we have seven matches to descendants of Robert and Elizabeth (10–42 cM).

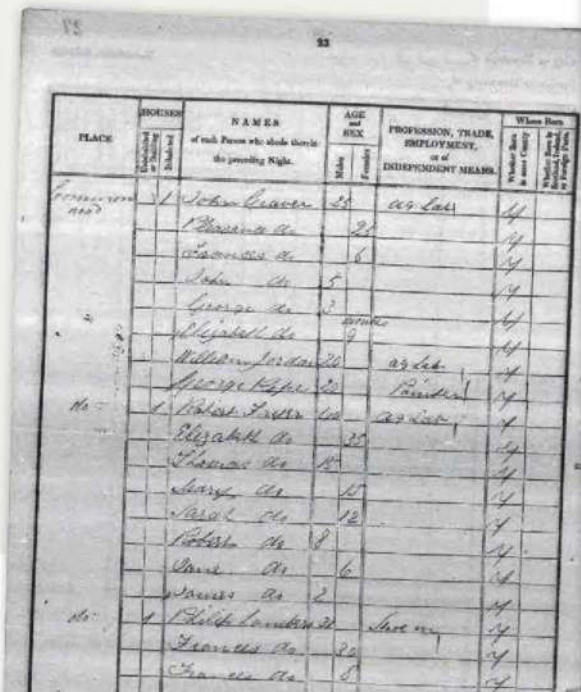
How can I confirm whether or not Robert and Elizabeth are my great great grandmother's parents?
Sheila Davis

A The matches are on the low side, but are potentially a good lead. If you've not done so, you need to use the Shared Matches tool at AncestryDNA (**ancestry.co.uk/dna**) to sort your matches into groups; see my article in the December 2023 issue. Do all the descendants of Robert and Elizabeth Frier appear in the same cluster of shared matches, so you can be sure they are matching on the same branch of your tree? Have you traced the matches' trees down to the present day, so you can work out your relationship with the matches? Are they all sharing the expected amount of DNA for the relationship?

Are there other matches in the cluster? If so, try building their trees back to see if they also link to Robert and Elizabeth. The more matches you link to the tree, the stronger the case.

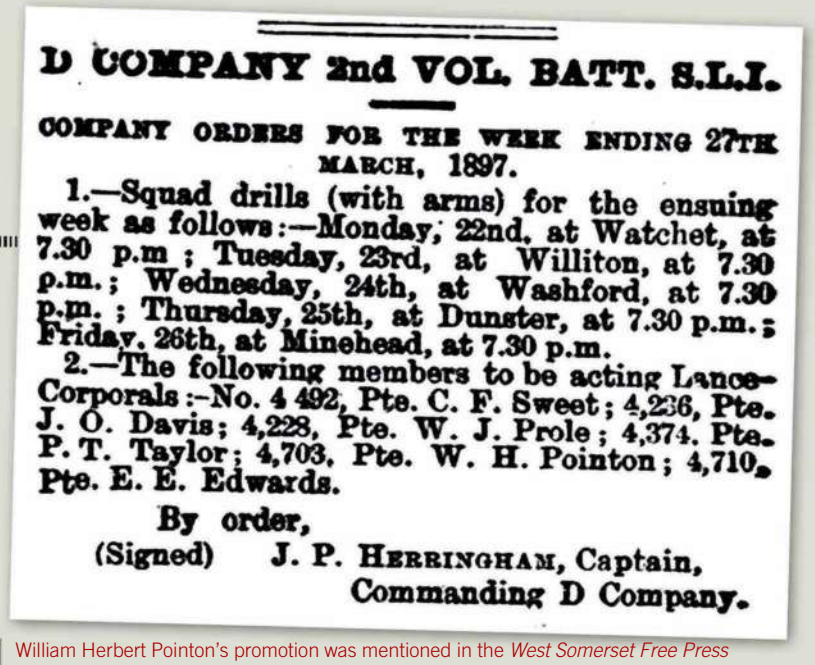
It can be further strengthened if you can find more distant matches descended through other lines from Elizabeth Frier's parents or grandparents. Do you know her maiden name?

You might also find it helpful to use the free WATO (What Are the Odds?) tool at DNA Painter (**dnapainter.com**). There are free tutorials on the website.
Debbie Kennett



Big Question

What was my great grandfather doing at Donington Hall POW camp?



D COMPANY 2nd VOL. BATT. S.L.I.

COMPANY ORDERS FOR THE WEEK ENDING 27TH MARCH, 1897.

1.—Squad drills (with arms) for the ensuing week as follows:—Monday, 22nd, at Watchet, at 7.30 p.m; Tuesday, 23rd, at Williton, at 7.30 p.m.; Wednesday, 24th, at Washford, at 7.30 p.m.; Thursday, 25th, at Dunster, at 7.30 p.m.; Friday, 26th, at Minehead, at 7.30 p.m.

2.—The following members to be acting Lance-Corporals:—No. 4 492, Pte. C. F. Sweet; 4,236, Pte. J. O. Davis; 4,228, Pte. W. J. Prole; 4,374. Pte. P. T. Taylor; 4,703, Pte. W. H. Pointon; 4,710, Pte. E. E. Edwards.

By order,

(Signed) J. P. HERRINGHAM, Captain, Commanding D Company.

William Herbert Pointon's promotion was mentioned in the *West Somerset Free Press*

Q My great grandfather, William Herbert Pointon, was born 1862 in Measham, Leicestershire, and died in 1931. In the 1921 census, he shows up on a 'Return of All Officers and Other Ranks or Ratings on Service' at Donington Hall, Castle Donington, Leicestershire, which was a German prisoner-of-war camp until 1919. His entry shows him 58, a private in the infantry, born in Measham, married, and listed with other servicemen.

I discovered, from an article in the *West Somerset Free Press* on 20 March 1897, that William had served in a volunteer battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry in 1897, and was recorded as a private 4703, promoted to acting lance corporal.

What was his connection to this camp and what was he doing there at his age?

Lisa Thackwell

LISA THACKWELL would love to know why her forebear was in a POW camp in England

A An ordinary soldier aged 58 is a rare beast indeed. Although a number of officers (including Field Marshal Roberts who died in France aged 82) beat the age handsomely, there can't have been too many rankers still serving at that age.

The William Herbert Pointon you discovered in the *West Somerset Free Press*, serving in a volunteer battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry in 1897, is almost certainly your forebear as he's recorded as living in Dunster, Somerset, in the 1901 census and born in Measham. By 1911, he and his family are back living in Measham.

Donington Hall was a POW camp for German officers during the First World War. Like their British counterparts they made a series of daring escapes, although only one reached Germany; search the newspapers on Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) using "Donington Hall escape" as keywords to find descriptions of many. The British press described the camp as "luxurious" – there was wine and beer available at mealtimes (it was for officers); not surprisingly, there was a certain amount of hostility. But after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and the return of the prisoners, it was closed down.

So what was William Herbert Pointon doing there on 19 June 1921, the date of the census? The answer lies in the date and the note on the cover of the census form (scan back about 15 pages from William's entry), which refers to the following pages as "Donington Hall – Royal Defence Corps". Donington Hall is only about 11 miles from Measham.

The Royal Defence Force was established in 1916 and was rather like the Second World War's Home Guard, protecting key points, watching the coast, and providing guards for POW camps. It consisted mainly of older men, many of whom were ex-soldiers. William, as a former volunteer soldier, was probably a member in the First World War. It was officially disbanded in 1919 and hastily reformed in April 1921 to counteract the overestimated threat posed by a proposed miners' strike and associated industrial actions. It was, after all, only four years since the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and the authorities were worried that things might get out of hand.

The Regular Army and the Territorial Army were still trying to reorganise after the First World War, and there had been unprecedented police strikes in 1918 and 1919, giving concern about how they might react. Search the newspaper archives using "volunteer" and "emergency" as keywords to find descriptions of the authorities' reaction.

Ex-soldiers could re-enlist for a guaranteed minimum of 90 days (longer if necessary) to support the civil powers if required. In the end, after negotiations, many of the proposed strikes were called off and the volunteers sent home. Newspaper reports suggest that Donington Hall was occupied by troops in June 1921, but they'd gone by September.

Service records for volunteers were destroyed in the Blitz, but given that William served in 1920 – the year that army service numbers changed – it's remotely possible his survive. Guidance on how to apply is at **www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-records-of-service**.

Phil Tomaselli

Return of all Officers and other ranks or ratings on Service

Lisa found this mysterious record of her great grandfather William Herbert Pointon on the 1921 census

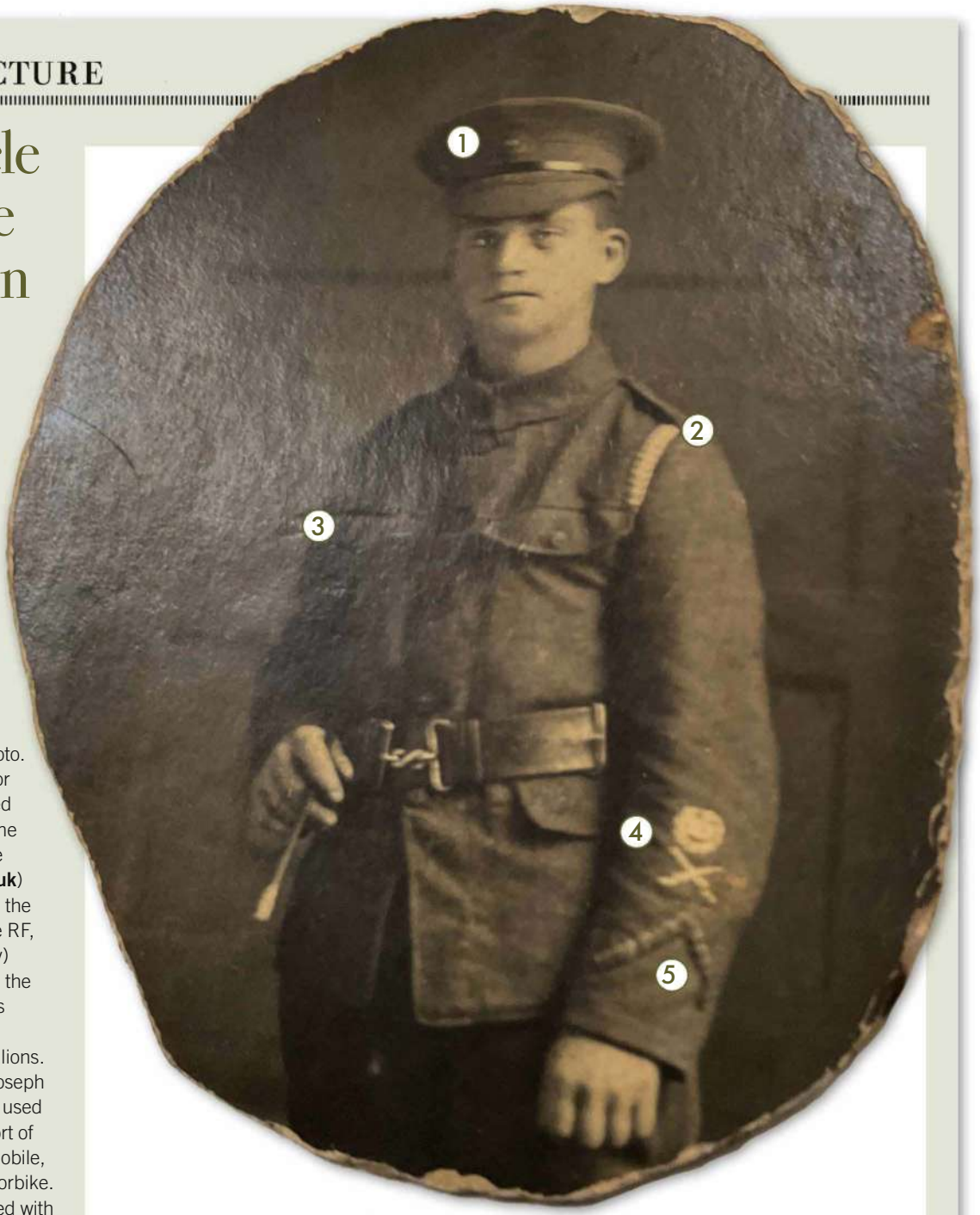
Was my uncle a motorcycle messenger in WW1?

Q This is a photograph of my uncle, Joseph Henry Ward, born in Hull in 1899. He told me he was a motorcycle messenger in the war – is this true?
Reg Brown

A This soldier has been in the Army for at least two years, and appears fully trained. Without a clear cap badge, the only clues we have are the fact that he rode a motorcycle and what we can derive from the photo.

There's a Medal Index Card for a Joseph Henry Ward who served in the Royal Fusiliers (RF) and the Machine Gun Corps (MGC). The card (on Ancestry; **ancestry.co.uk**) suggests he went to France with the MGC and later transferred to the RF, but the medal roll (also Ancestry) suggests he went to France with the RF, then transferred. This seems more likely. In 1916, several RF battalions became training battalions. As a trained machine-gunner, Joseph would be a natural fit. The MGC used massed machine-guns in support of the infantry and needed to be mobile, which possibly explains the motorbike.

On the medal roll, he's grouped with three other former Royal Fusiliers, with consecutive numbers. One, Sergeant Charles Edwin Hickson, died in France in May 1918. The website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (**cwgc.org**) says that he was serving with 3rd Battalion, MGC, formed in March 1918 in 3rd Division. It's likely Joseph also served with this unit. You can download the battalion's War Diary (February 1918 – September 1919; WO 95/1405/1) for free from The National Archives' website: **tinyurl.com/tna-disc-mgc**.
Phil Tomaselli



1 CAP BADGE

The cap badge is indistinct. It certainly isn't the Royal Fusiliers, but may be an army button with a cloth behind, indicating a training battalion, and dates the photo to late 1916 at the earliest.

2 LANYARD

The white lanyard may indicate the Royal Fusiliers, although other regiments wore it. When the image is enlarged you can see what appear to be two cloth badges as might be worn by training battalions.

3 TUNIC

The tunic is a 1915-produced economy jacket that has no pleats on the pockets and the belt has an old-style snake buckle brought out of stores because of shortages – probably still worn in training battalions.

4 BADGES

The crossed rifles indicate that he's a trained marksman, and the badge above that he's a trained machine-gunner.

5 CUFFS

The inverted V on the cuff is a Good Conduct Chevron. One indicates two years' service, with no black marks, so he's been in the Army for at least two years.

MERCHANDISE

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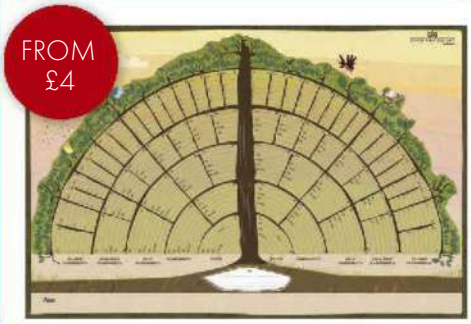

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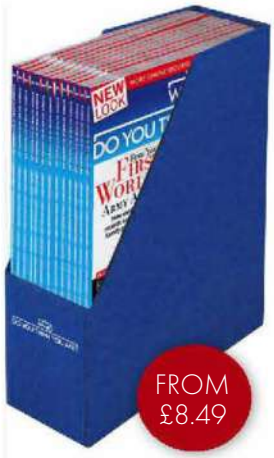

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LOCAL INDUSTRY

Celebrating our ancestors' work in key trades

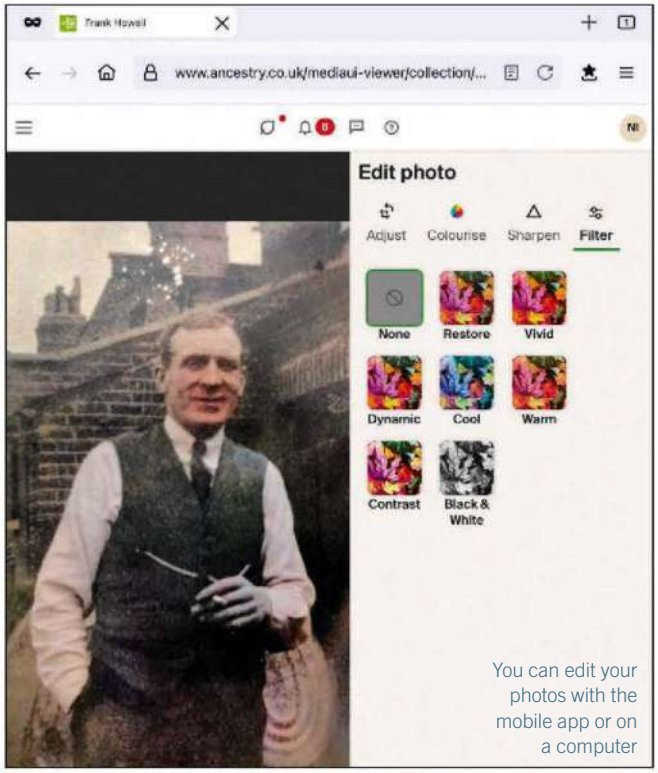
GETTY IMAGES

The Women Of War

Female workers in Small Arms Cartridge Factory No. 3 at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, South-East London, in May 1918

Hundreds of thousands of British women played a vital role during the First World War as 'munitionettes', manufacturing bombs, shells and ammunition in factories across the country, of which 218 were 'National Factories' run by the newly created Ministry of Munitions. The long shifts (often lasting 12 hours) involved labour that was frequently hard, unpleasant and dangerous; 134 workers died in an explosion at a factory in Chilwell, Nottinghamshire, in July 1918, while exposure to toxic chemicals had a range of effects including, for those nicknamed 'Canary Girls', their hair and skin being tinted yellow. You can learn more about National Factories from a report by Historic England (**tinyurl.com/his-eng-nffs**), and read the memories of munitionette Caroline Rennles on the website of the Imperial War Museums (**tinyurl.com/iwm-cr**).

- Please email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk* if you recognise any of the women in our photograph and can share their stories with us.



You can edit your photos with the mobile app or on a computer

Edit photographs on your Ancestry tree

Nick Peers reveals how to upload, edit and colourise your family pictures using Ancestry

Are you struggling to get your photos looking their best on your Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) family tree? The good news is that all of the tools you need can be found on the website itself, and inside the company's mobile app on your smartphone or tablet. You can upload photographs, add a title and description, tag it to one or more relations so it appears in their personal gallery, and even perform edits on the image itself. That includes making use of Ancestry's AI-powered tools to sharpen and colourise black-and-white photos.

You'll need an account with Ancestry to access the tools because they're linked to your online tree, but you don't need to be currently subscribed to any paid services to upload images to your tree and edit them.

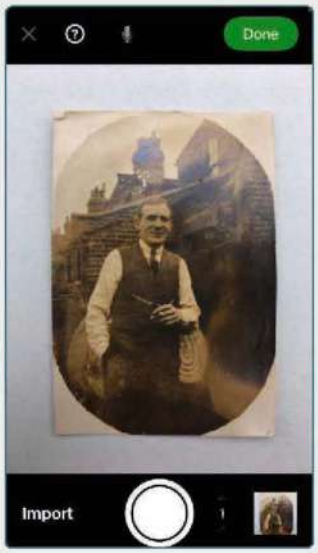
In this month's article, we've focused on adding and editing pictures using the mobile app, which works on both Android and Apple devices. However, note that you can use the exact same tools on a desktop computer too. Just go to Ancestry's website, log in, open a person's profile from your online tree, then switch to the 'Gallery' view where you can upload images or click on an existing photograph to edit it.

TOP TIP!

After uploading a photo, tap the Pencil button next to the profile-pic placeholder and select 'Choose from Person's Gallery' to select it for their headshot.

1 Select Your Relation

Open the Ancestry app and tap 'Tree' to view your online tree. Tap and drag (or use the Search button) to locate a family member, then tap them to open their profile page. You'll see a 'Gallery' section, complete with any existing photos. To edit an existing picture, tap it followed by the Pencil button and jump to Step 3; otherwise tap the Camera button to the left.



2 Add A New Photo

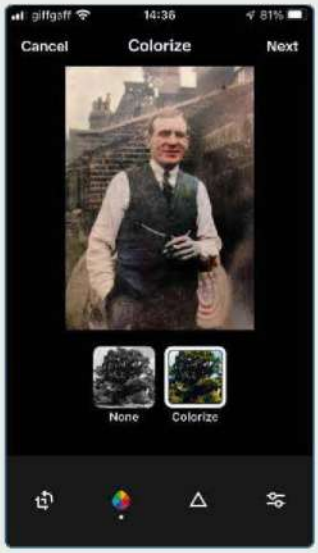
You'll see several options: you can select existing images on your camera roll, upload a file from your phone's storage (or available in the cloud), or tap 'Scan Photos' to use your phone's camera like a scanner. This allows you to line up a photo, snap it and then the app will automatically straighten it and perform other tweaks to improve it. Tap 'Done' when it's finished.

3 Tweak Your Photo

If you've scanned a photo, you'll be immediately whisked to the 'Adjust' screen (if not, tap the Pencil button to access it). You'll see four buttons at the bottom, with the Crop/Rotate button selected by default. Use the Crop tool to crop out any unwanted parts of the picture, as shown above. The four buttons beneath it allow you to rotate or flip the image if necessary.

4 Colourise Your Photograph

The next button – Colorize – lets you tap into Ancestry's AI tools to attempt to convert black-and-white images into realistic (but not necessarily accurate) colour. Tap the button, then wait while the effect is applied. Leave 'Colorize' selected if you're happy with the results, or tap 'None' if you'd prefer the picture to remain black and white or sepia.



5 Sharpen Your Photo

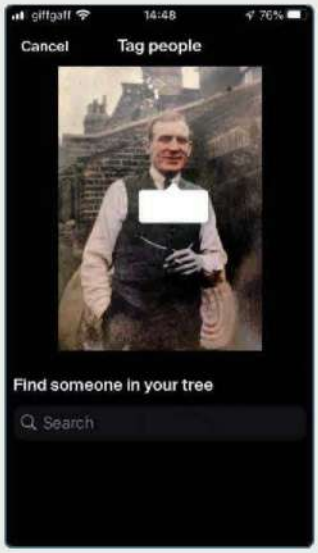
The Triangle button allows you to apply a simple one-click sharpen filter to the photo. You can zoom into the picture (tap and pinch it) to see the effect up close. It tends to look good from a distance, but when you zoom in, the effect often doesn't hold up too well. Tap 'None' to see how it originally looked, or to reject the filter in favour of the unsharpened version.

6 Apply Colour Filters

The final option allows you to experiment with a selection of different filters that perform a range of different colour and brightness effects. There's also a 'Black and White' filter for applying to sepia photos. Experiment with each filter until you find one that you like, or just leave 'None' selected. When you're satisfied, tap 'Next'.

7 Add Tags

You'll next be prompted to tag any faces in the photograph – the app can detect more than one face. Tap 'Tag photo' to see the current tag. If it's been incorrectly applied, tap the name on the picture followed by the 'X' button to remove it, then tap the face and start typing your relative's name into the 'Search' box. If the correct name of your relation is suggested, tap it to select it.



8 Widen Your Search

By default the Search function only searches immediate family, so if necessary tap the Settings button to the right of 'Tag someone' to extend the search to include 'Everyone in My Tree'. When you've found the correct match, tap their name and the tag should be applied to the image. If there are any other faces in the photo, tap each face to tag them in turn, then tap 'Done'.

9 Add Photo Details

Finally, scroll down to reveal fields for adding a title, date and location to your photograph. You can also add a description and assign it a particular category. When you're happy with your choices, tap 'Add' to upload the picture to your tree. If this is the first image that you've added to the person's profile, it'll automatically become their profile photo; if not, see the 'Top Tip!' on the previous page.

Threats and coercion at an election in Middlesex, 1775

GETTY IMAGES

GOING TO THE POLLS

Felicity Day looks at how elections have changed in the past 250 years

When our ancestors headed to the polls in 1774, the general election could hardly have looked more different to the one we await this year. Instead of a single day, it took five weeks to conclude, different constituencies opening and closing their poll on dates of their choosing, some lasting mere hours, others four weeks. There were no private polling booths or lidded boxes to slip anonymous ballot papers into; all votes were cast aloud, in front of crowds of spectators – where the seats were contested, that is. A staggering 70 per cent were not, with the new members of parliament (MPs) simply nodded into the House of Commons, irrespective of the local electorate's opinion. It was raucous, alcohol-fuelled and dogged by civil disturbances, and absolutely typical of an 18th-century election.

The custom of counties and boroughs sending representatives to Parliament dates back to at least the 14th century, but active election of members was uncommon before the late 1600s, and still not routine by the late 1700s. Most of Britain's constituencies had two seats – even those like Old Sarum in Wiltshire, one of the famous 'rotten boroughs' with no residents whatsoever – and where only two candidates were nominated, or rival factions agreed on one seat each to represent their differing interests, no poll needed to be held.

Where there were contests, canvassing involved everything from distributing handbills to paying calls and promising patronage – along with supplying plenty of free drink. The wining and dining of prospective voters – known as 'treating' – was strictly illegal, yet ubiquitous, as was the paying of generous poll-day travel expenses for those living in the distant corners of the district. Even more barefaced bribery was commonplace, too. In the run-up to the 1774 election householders in Hindon, Wiltshire, were given up to 20 guineas each (approximately £2,000 today). And if all that failed, some candidates resorted to threats.

Public Proclamation

Facilitating the 'buying' (or bullying) of votes was the very public nature of the poll. A voter's two votes were cast orally in front of election officials, candidates and agents in the ▶

district's temporary polling booth. This was usually a wooden structure situated, with the hustings platform from which candidates addressed electors, in the marketplace or by the town hall, and around which gathered large and lively crowds, perhaps including a voter's friends, neighbours, customers, employer or landlord. All votes were then recorded – with the voter's name, address and occupation – in poll books, the contents of which might eventually be splashed across the newspapers or printed in a pamphlet.

The process conferred a certain power on the community's non-voters – who might sway shopkeepers by threatening boycotts, for example – but equally, made it easy for the already powerful to control the result. One candidate in Newark, Nottinghamshire, was forced to withdraw in 1774 amid reports that the wealthy "Mr C–" had told his 200-odd tenants that "they must all turn out" of their houses if they voted for him. The locals, resentful of Mr C's coercion, duly broke his windows.

Georgian elections were rarely unaccompanied by such violence and disorder. Free drink, combined with flag-waving processions, noisy chanting of partisan ballads, hourly 'state of the poll' announcements, and stirring speeches from the hustings, whipped up just the sort of febrile and divisive atmosphere that fostered it. In fact, such was the risk of harassment and intimidation (even kidnap!) that, for protection, voters typically proceeded to the poll in 'tallies' – groups of 10–20 men supporting the same candidate. Peaceable polls might conclude with a good-natured 'chairing' of the new MPs, carried through the constituency by their supporters, but many others ended with carriages set on fire, as in Cambridge in 1774; stones raining through the windows of the town hall at the returning officers, as in Bedford that year; or the winning candidates narrowly escaping from an angry mob, as in Morpeth, Northumberland.

GETTY IMAGES

Franchise Extension

By the time our ancestors voted in 1874's general election, some things had changed. The electorate had only marginally expanded; Reform Acts in 1832 and 1867 had seen voters in boroughs like Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, increase four- or five-fold, although overall eligible voters still represented less than

Charles Ignatius Sancho c1729–1780

How one voter blazed a trail 250 years ago

Charles Ignatius Sancho made history in 1774 as the first person of African descent to vote in a British election.

Born on a slave ship crossing the Atlantic, on which both his parents died, Sancho was sold and brought to London as a toddler, before being given to three unmarried sisters. One of their acquaintances, the 2nd Duke of Montagu, encouraged and facilitated his education, and Sancho would go on to work as a butler and valet for his family, mingling with royals and befriending stars like actor David Garrick and Laurence Sterne, author of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–1767).

By 1774, he was not only a published writer and composer, but he and his wife Anne were in business as tea dealers and grocers, selling from a shop in Westminster. As a male property owner, Sancho was thus eligible to vote; no British legislation ever prevented a prospective elector from doing so on account of their race.

His votes went to two aristocratic government candidates. When he voted for the second and final time in 1780 – shortly before his death that December, probably as a result of a gout-related illness – he split his two votes, giving one to abolitionist Whig Charles James Fox.

Candidates for the constituency of Westminster in 1780 address the crowd in Covent Garden, including the eventual winner Charles James Fox *(centre)*

GETTY IMAGES

10 per cent of the population, and women were now specifically excluded from the franchise by law, rather than by custom as before. The process of polling, however, had been transformed.

Gone, by 1874, was the suspense of long-running polls; legislation had limited them to a single day, with all voters to pre-register and votes to be cast between 8am and 5pm, minimising opportunities for 'treating' (or incapacitating the opposition's supporters) with alcohol. Gone were journeys across hill and dale to vote; every voter was to be within four miles of a polling place. Gone were the rotten boroughs, their seats reallocated to rapidly growing cities like Manchester. And gone were the live poll updates, and the whole parade of voting in public – although the last only recently.

Bizarre as it seems to us, secret voting was controversial. The race-day feel of public polling was popular, and its sense of accountability cherished. "Damn the secret ballot," one particularly forthright Berkshire MP put it. "Give me the bold-faced Englishman who, with his hat on one side, swaggers up to the polling booth, and when the clerk says, 'For whom do you vote?', answers manfully and IN THE FACE OF HIS NEIGHBOURS."

Deaths, Riots And Bribery

But election-day violence and intimidation had only got worse in the Victorian era. There were 17 deaths and at least 37 full-scale riots during the 1868 general election, besides innumerable smaller brawls. Prompted by growing concerns about safety – and bribery – Parliament had eventually legislated for the secret ballot in 1872, introducing ballot papers, pencilled crosses and private, compartment-style polling booths, road-tested in a by-election in Pontefract, the West Riding of Yorkshire, that year.

Problems emerged with the new system, particularly enabling illiterate electors, of which there were still some 35,000 by 1880, to vote secretly. And the *South Wales Daily News* complained in 1872 that elections, formerly festive occasions, had become "the most monotonous of monotonies". But, when combined with new anti-corruption laws in 1883, which set limits on campaign expenses for the first time, and made bribery potentially punishable by prison sentence, there was little doubt that elections were safer.

The 20th century saw elections evolve even further. By the general election of 1924, all districts nationwide were returning just one MP, and all voting took place on the same day – now between 8am and 8pm, for the greater convenience of employed voters. In 1935, that national polling day became – by convention, not law – a Thursday. And in 1969, Britain reduced the voting age to 18, which had been set at 21 since 1695. Some things remained the same; as recently as 1951, MPs were elected unopposed, and theoretically still could be. But with today's turnouts ever-falling and technology ever-improving, there seems little doubt that further change is inevitable.

FELICITY DAY is a historian. Her book *The Game of Hearts: True Stories of Regency Romance* will be published in paperback by Blink on 25 April

Resources

Take your research further

ARCHIVE

THE PARLIAMENTARY ARCHIVES
a **Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW**
t 020 7219 3074
e *archives@parliament.uk*
w **archives.parliament.uk**
The archive holds a range of material relating to elections.

BOOK

The Secret Diaries of Charles Ignatius Sancho
Paterson Joseph
Dialogue Books, 2022
This fictionalised account is based closely on known facts.

WEBSITES

BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE
w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**
Newspapers often covered the conduct of elections.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POLITICAL PARTICIPATION & ELECTORAL CULTURE
w **ecppec.ncl.ac.uk**
This Newcastle University project is a great resource for parliamentary elections between 1695 and the 1832 Reform Act.

THE HISTORY OF PARLIAMENT
w **www.historyofparliamentonline.org**
Here you will find biographies of thousands of MPs, and a wealth of information about the political history of constituencies.

THE VICTORIAN COMMONS
w **victoriancommons.wordpress.com**
This blog is full of interesting gems about Victorian elections.

WDYTYA? MAGAZINE
w **tinyurl.com/wdytya-elec**
Learn where to find online poll books, recording how people voted, and electoral registers, introduced in 1832.

EUREKA MOMENT

How a reader broke down a research brick wall

'Mortimer Ran A Dodgy Dating Agency'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

Greta Nicholls has used online records to uncover the shocking truth behind a family secret involving her great grandfather, says **Gail Dixon**

Dating agencies, and their online equivalents, are not a modern invention. From at least Tudor times, parish priests would dabble in matchmaking by introducing people of similar social standing.

Commercial agencies emerged in Britain in the early 19th century, attracting clients who often valued class and income far higher than a good sense of humour. Greta Nicholls was surprised to discover that her great grandfather Mortimer Skates ran a dating agency that hit the headlines in 1895.

My Brick Wall

My grandmother Ida Heckrath (née Skates) didn't speak of her birth family, apart from her sister Edith who lived in Australia. Ida was born in 1884 to Mortimer Daniel Skates and his wife Kate Pratt who lived in Camberwell, South London. According to the birth certificate, Mortimer was a "commercial traveller".

GRETA NICHOLLS is a retired biomedical scientist on the Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia. She has been researching her family history since 1975

I started looking into the Skates family when I was living in Auckland, New Zealand, in the 1980s. The public library had a good section on genealogy, and I found them quite easily.

My mother Pauline was astonished to hear about the family she knew nothing about.

It was also upsetting to discover that her grandfather Mortimer, whom she'd never met, died in 1939 when she was 21.

I was able to tell Mum a lot about Mortimer, who was born in Berkshire in 1855.

However, Mum died in 2004 without knowing the reason why her grandfather was never mentioned by the family.

My Eureka Moment

I'm a member of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists, and one day in 2009 I noticed a link to the British Newspaper Archive on its website **genealogy.org.nz**. I visited **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**, keyed in Mortimer's name and up came pages of articles about him. I couldn't believe my eyes.

The reports revealed a scandal from late Victorian times, which was covered nationwide. It centred on the dating agency that Mortimer (alias Daniel Mortimer) and his brother John Skates had established in London in 1883.

The World's Great Marriage

Researching Criminal Ancestors

These websites may help you find family members who fell foul of the law

Ancestry

w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61808**

These post-trial lists provide insight into a criminal's life. They include details such as their trade, previous convictions, their charge, the victim's name and the sentence.

British Newspaper Archive

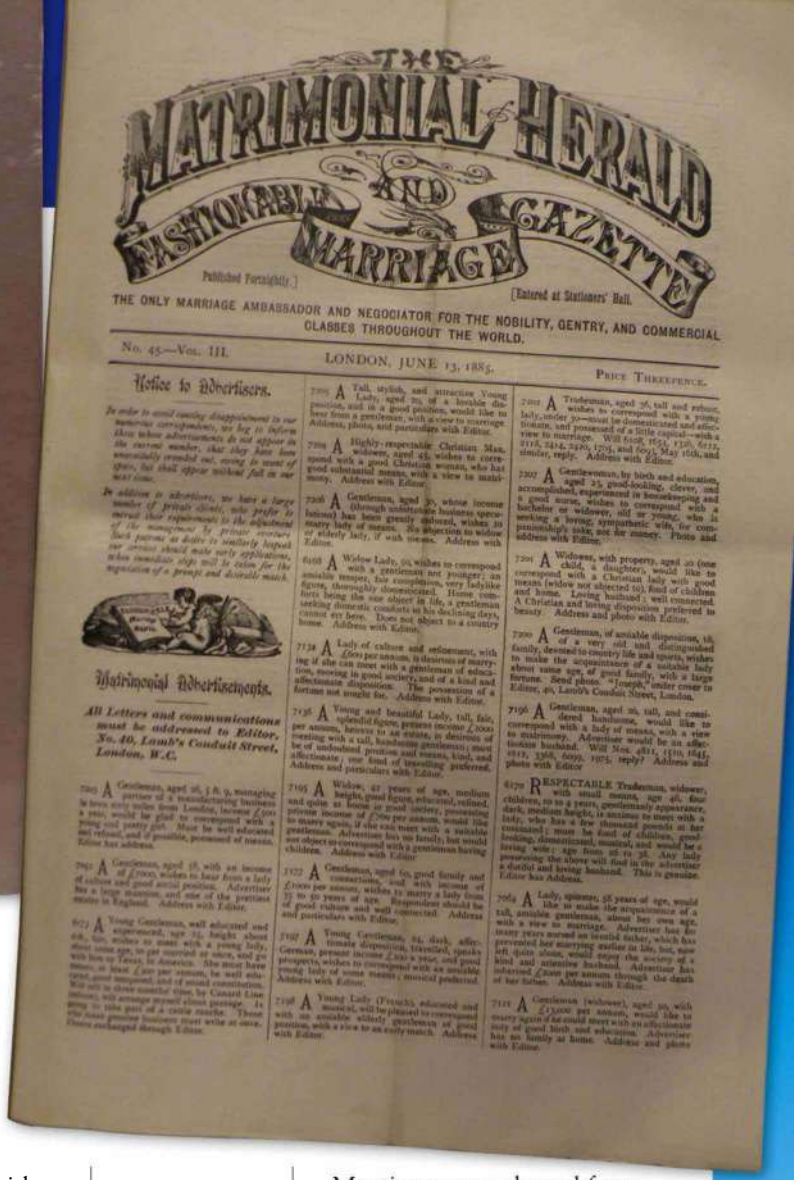
w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**

Newspapers are a great source for fleshing out the lives of offenders. Victorians loved reading about crime, so journalists often included as much detail as possible. Also on Findmypast.

Old Bailey Online

w **oldbaileyonline.org**

A vast range of cases were heard at London's central criminal court, from pickpocketing and fraud to murder. The trial transcriptions allow you to 'hear' the voices of the past.



THE MATRIMONIAL HERALD AND FASHIONABLE MARRIAGE GAZETTE

Published Fortnightly. [Entered at Stationers' Hall.

THE ONLY MARRIAGE AMBASSADOR AND NEGOCIATOR FOR THE NOBILITY, GENTRY, AND COMMERCIAL CLASSES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

No. 45.—Vol. III. LONDON, JUNE 13, 1885. PRICE THREEPENCE.

Notice to Advertisers.

Matrimonial Advertisements.

All Letters and communications must be addressed to Editor, No. 45, Laub's Conduit Street, London, W.C.

Above left: Greta's grandmother Ida Heckrath (née Skates) with her daughter Ruby in 1906

Above right: notices from one of the agency's publications

Association Company Limited became a very successful business employing 30 clerks. Curiously, this wasn't mentioned on Ida's birth certificate, and I thought it odd that Mortimer used an alias.

The agency published a fortnightly gazette. It cost 4s to place a 50-word advertisement, and additional sums were charged for 'introductions'.

Replies were dealt with by the editor, and names were never published. If a man married a woman he met through the agency, he had to pay them 2.5 per cent of her estate, or £12 10s in advance to avoid this.

In an issue from 1884, a lady writes that she is "The daughter of a country gentleman, who has a fortune of £2,000 in her own right, considered pretty, and of good educational attainments, finding home unbearable, would like to correspond with a gentleman of good position".

The agency boasted of being "exclusively patronized by nobility and gentry", and flourished for 12 years. However, by the mid-1890s dissatisfaction was growing among a number of its male subscribers.

Scotland Yard received complaints from clients claiming that they'd had no success with female correspondents, some of whom had suddenly stopped replying or "had gone to live on the Continent". A number of men also alleged that the replies they'd received from different women were in the same handwriting.

On 11 November 1895, the police arrested Mortimer and John along with three other employees. They were taken to Bow Street Police Station, and charged with fraud and conspiracy.

The trial began at the Old Bailey in February 1896. In their defence, several satisfied clients testified that they had made good matches through the agency.

However, the prosecution called a handwriting expert who stated that the writing on many of the replies from women was the same. Mortimer and John were convicted of fraud, and sentenced to three years' and five years' penal servitude respectively.

My Breakthrough

I felt shocked when I read the newspaper articles. Naturally, they explained the reason for Ida's silence about her father – she must have been embarrassed that Mortimer went to prison.

Ida was only 11 when he was convicted and had three siblings, Sydney, Edith and Frederick, all aged under 16. Their mother Kate had died 10 days before Mortimer's arrest as well.

Mortimer was released from gaol in 1899, and in the 1901 census was living with Sydney and Edith in Peckham, South-East London. I think that he kept in touch with Ida, because Aunt Joan remembered her reading a letter signed "your loving father".

After 1933, Mortimer lived in Sidcup, Kent, with a much younger woman, Alice Loates. They're buried in the same grave, which she bought. It appears he found love again. I can't help wondering how they met.

HAVE YOU BROKEN THROUGH A BRICK WALL?

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

Reader Tips

If you're stuck, you should try Greta's recommendations

- Don't forget to look in online newspaper archives. They're a wealth of information.
- Go back over previous research and try to see it with fresh eyes.
- Join your local family history society, for inspiration and tips.

BRITISH LIBRARY

Remembering Workhouse Inmates

Rosemary Collins meets the volunteers researching workhouse burials in Kent

Woodbury Park Cemetery is the final resting place of many inmates of a local workhouse

The Grade II-listed Woodbury Park Cemetery in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, opened in 1849 and received burials until 1934. The notable people buried there include Rev Henry Thomas Austen (Jane Austen's brother), painter Charles Tattershall Dodd and Jacob Bell, who co-founded the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain in 1841. The Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery (FWPC; **fwpc.org.uk**) was founded in 2006 and is dedicated to conserving the cemetery. In autumn 2023 Emma Vidler, a member of the FWPC's committee, began a project to research more unsung lives – the 78 former inmates of Tonbridge Union Workhouse who were buried in the cemetery between 1856 and 1915.

"We have the burial register that records where they died, so I went to Kent Archives in Maidstone (**kentarchives.org.uk**) and had a look at the surviving records," Emma explains. "I was able to use the workhouse death registers to verify the deaths."

Tonbridge Union Workhouse opened in 1835, and closed in 1938. Like other Victorian workhouses, it was a place of last resort for men, women and children facing destitution.

Emma has used genealogical records to uncover many of the lives of the inmates buried in the cemetery: "I think often people who died in challenging circumstances may not have their full story told. They were likely there because of illness or maybe a bit of bad luck, but they did have a story before that, and a lot of them had skilled occupations. We've also got a few carpenters, a beer shopkeeper, lady's maids and other people who worked in service. They lived a life that was more than where they died, and it's really important that we tell those stories."

One of the poignant stories she's uncovered is that of the Tomkins family (spelled Tompkins in some records). Samuel Tomkins, a carpenter, was frequently recorded as being admitted to the workhouse, along with his wife Sarah and their four children. Two of their children died in the workhouse – eight-year-old Catherine in 1868 and 11-month-old Albert in 1870. Emma has also found records of a fifth child, Lizzie, who was born in the workhouse in 1867 and died two weeks later of smallpox. A newspaper article revealed that on the day Lizzie was born, Samuel was reprimanded in the workhouse for refusing to work and assaulted a porter. He was admitted to the county lunatic asylum, where he stayed for over a year.

Lizzie is one of three babies who Emma has identified, who she suspects were buried in the cemetery but not included in the burial register. The other two died shortly after their mothers passed away following complications after childbirth.

They were buried in unmarked graves, or with wooden markers that are lost

The workhouse inmates were buried in unmarked graves, or with wooden markers that have now been lost. Emma and the rest of the FWPC team are now trying to work out where their graves are. To do so, Emma went through old newspaper records, where she discovered something shocking: in an 1884 article, a former sexton at the cemetery said that "some hundreds of stillborns and unbaptised children" were buried in the cemetery unrecorded. Many more forgotten lives could be hidden there.

October 2024 sees the 175th anniversary of the first burial in the cemetery. The FWPC is hoping to use the occasion to add a memorial to the unmarked and unrecorded graves it holds.

Get Involved

Friends Of Woodbury Park Cemetery

w **fwpc.org.uk/contact-us**

The FWPC is looking for volunteers to help with Emma's project or the cemetery gardening team. To get involved, contact the secretary via the online form.

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your local history project with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *rosemary.collins@ourmedia.co.uk*

EMMA VIDLER

Around Britain

Shropshire

Jonathan Scott shares genealogy tips from the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution

The Wrekin is a prominent hill five miles west of Telford

GETTY IMAGES

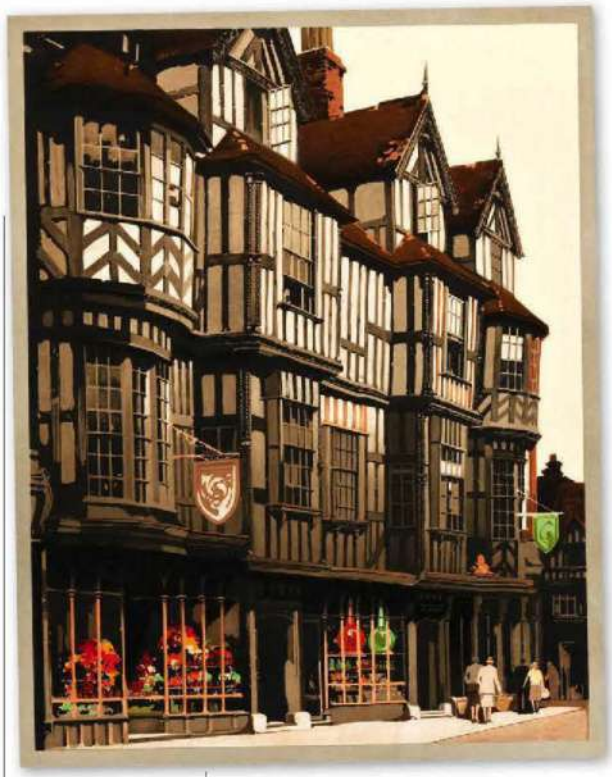
Evidence of Shropshire's industrial past can be found in both the landscape and the county's museums and archives. For example, the main archive in Shrewsbury (**shropshirearchives.org.uk**) has original wage books for the Coalbrookdale Company (reference 245/144–145). Coalbrookdale was a particular crucible for change, where iron ore was first smelted using the more easily mined 'coking coal', producing cheaper and higher-quality iron in one of the major innovations of the Industrial Revolution. The books, which stretch back to the late 18th century, give the names of the workers, the kind of work they were carrying out, and the payment they received.

Ephemera relating to iron, steel and other heavy industries also survive at the Ironbridge Gorge Museums' Library & Archives. Highlights include 730 orders undertaken by the Coalbrookdale Company in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, generally for decorative or architectural works such as railings, lampposts and verandas. Via the website you can view a selection of original designs plus photos of the firm's creations that are still in use: **https://www.ironbridge.org.uk/learn/museum-collections/stories-from-the-collections/revealing-research/**.

Thanks to an agreement with Findmypast, most of the parish registers for this region have been digitised up to 1900 (**findmypast.co.uk/articles/world-records/search-all-uk-records/special-collections/the-shropshire-collection**). In total, the county archive holds registers from about 300 Church of England parishes, as well as chapel registers for nonconformist and Roman Catholic churches. Parish-by-parish guides that list what registers survive, whether they're Anglican, Catholic or nonconformist, and whether any indexes or transcriptions are available, are at **shropshirearchives.org.uk/collections/parish-registers**.

Gems In The Parish Chest

Parish-chest material, for example removal orders and bastardy bonds from before the introduction of the 1834 Poor Law, can be searched by name via the online catalogue: **shropshirearchives.org.uk/advice-and-guides/how-to-search-our-catalogue/**. However, this is not a diocesan record office, so you need to look elsewhere for Bishops' Transcripts, wills and marriage licences. These are found in any of the three diocesan collections that cover historic Shropshire, namely Lichfield (the new Staffordshire History Centre; **staffordshire.gov.uk/Heritage-and-archives/homepage.aspx**), Hereford (Herefordshire Archive and Record Centre; **herefordshire.gov.uk/herefordshire-archive-records-centre**) and St Asaph (the National Library of Wales; **library.wales**).



This Tudor property was built c1575 for John Ireland, a wool merchant in Shrewsbury

The county archive holds registers from about 300 Church of England parishes

Another source preserved here that might not be on your radar are the Marriage Duty Act assessments for Shrewsbury, from 1695–1702 (reference 3365/275–278). Archivist Kerry Evans explains their origin. "The tax was placed on marriages, births and deaths, and upon bachelors over 25 years of age and childless widowers. Assessors were instructed to provide the names of every resident including their social standing, occupation, marital status and property

Shropshire Through The Ages

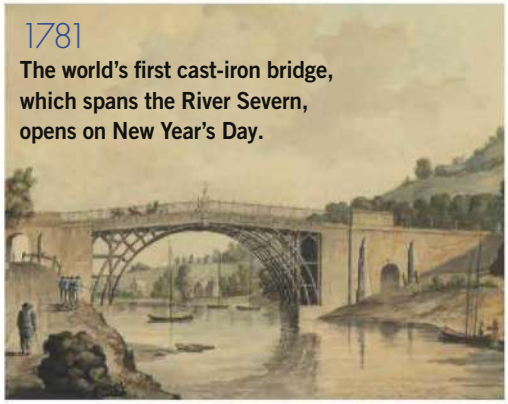
Historical highlights from the region

1708

Abraham Darby acquires premises in Coalbrookdale, where he will use coking coal to make higher-quality iron. His son Abraham Darby II, grandson Abraham Darby III and great great grandson Abraham Darby IV also become major figures in iron manufacturing.

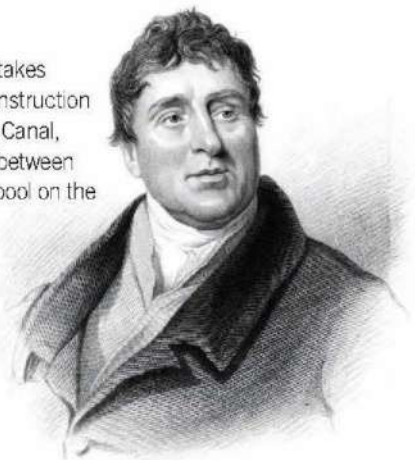
1781

The world's first cast-iron bridge, which spans the River Severn, opens on New Year's Day.



1793

Thomas Telford takes charge of the construction of the Ellesmere Canal, intended to run between the Port of Liverpool on the Mersey and the River Severn at Shrewsbury, including the spectacular Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.



GETTY IMAGES

ownership. The assessments therefore provide a wonderful source for family history."

Kerry also recommends a useful collection of settlement examinations from Wellington (reference P291/L/3/1). Archive assistant Alison Mussell, one of Kerry's colleagues, says, "The examinations begin from September 1821 and extend to 1830, with some later notes added. They provide a fascinating glimpse into the lives of ordinary people who have fallen on hard times as well as some extraordinary circumstances."

The examinations established whether someone had a right of settlement in the parish, and therefore that the parish was obliged to support them. The book is arranged alphabetically by surname, so it is easy to identify relations and repeat claims, and the index is now online complete with digital images.

Volunteer Projects

Volunteers are currently indexing records relating to crime and punishment – including calendars of prisoners and quarter-session rolls – which will eventually be added to the online catalogue. They've also completed a project to index policies issued by the Salop Fire Office ('Salop' was an old name for Shropshire).

Insuring property against the threat of fire can be traced back to the Great Fire of London in 1666, as Kerry discusses in a blog on the archive's website (**shropshirearchives.org.uk/blog/fire-fire/**). A number of newly formed companies found success in the capital, one of which – the Sun Fire Office – recruited local agents to sign up customers across the country. "The documents which record this indemnity are a neglected research source and can prove a great asset to the work of genealogists as well as house, social and economic historians."

The Salop Fire Office collection comprises a dozen books listing all of its policies from 1780–1889, covering properties located in Shropshire, Staffordshire and Montgomeryshire: **shropshirearchives.org.uk/collections/fire-insurance-policies.**

The information in the records includes the date, the name of the policy holder, the name of any tenants, and a description of the property and its address,

Free Online Records

This month's selection comprises memorial inscriptions, parish registers, wills, directories, a First World War roll of honour and fire-insurance polices

Directories
w **bit.ly/special-shrops**

The county directories at Special Collections Online include Kelly's volumes from 1891, 1895 and 1913.

Parish Registers
w **tinyurl.com/fs-shrops-reg**

FamilySearch, the largest free genealogical website in the world, has Shropshire parish registers (1538–1918).

Insurance Policies
w **tinyurl.com/shrops-fire**

You can use Shropshire Archives' catalogue to browse scanned and indexed copies of fire-insurance registers.

Wills
w **staffsnameindexes.org.uk**

This website's probate index for the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry (1570–1790) includes northern Shropshire.

Memorial Inscriptions
w **tinyurl.com/sfhs-mis**

Shropshire Family History Society has indexed 9,000 surnames from more than 350 burial sites.

WW1 Roll Of Honour
w **www.shropshire remembers.org.uk**

This First World War commemorative project records the county's war dead.

1897

Shropshire Horticultural Society, organiser of the long-running Shrewsbury Flower Show, erects a statue of Shrewsbury-born naturalist Charles Darwin outside Shrewsbury Library – the location of his former school.

GETTY IMAGES

1919

Ellesmere-born sisters, social reformers and campaigners Eglantyne Jebb and Dorothy Buxton launch the charity Save the Children in response to the Allies' continued blockade of Europe.

1924

England and Wolverhampton Wanderers footballer Billy Wright is born in Ironbridge.

1977

Horsehay-born author Edith Pargeter publishes *A Morbid Taste for Bones* under the pen name 'Ellis Peters'. The book introduces her long-running detective character Brother Cadfael, and the action occurs in Shrewsbury Abbey.

2018

Life-sized silhouettes are installed on The Green at Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, representing the 37 female workers in the ceramic and iron industries across the Gorge who gained the right to vote in 1918.

This watercolour of the 11th-century Ludlow Castle was created in the 1760s

▶ and they can be browsed or searched via the online catalogue.

Another unique resource, the Ludlow Castle Heraldic Roll (reference 9546), was found in an antique shop in London only nine years ago.

The document was created c1580 and contains 42 coats of arms of some of the owners of Ludlow Castle, as well as presidents and members of the Council in the Marches of Wales from the 11th century to the 16th, and was bought for the archive following an appeal by Mortimer History Society and the Friends of Ludlow Museum.

WATCH OUT!

Shropshire is covered by three separate dioceses: Lichfield, Hereford and St Asaph. So Bishops' Transcripts reside in different places depending on where you are researching.

High-resolution images can be seen on the archive's website at **shropshirearchives.org.uk/collections/getrecord/CCA_X9546_1**.

A new room has just opened at the archive for group events and talks, named after pioneering local archaeologist and antiquarian Lily Chitty (1893–1979), and staff are currently in the process of rearranging the Reading Room and Local Studies collections.

"Use of microfiche and film readers has declined, so this also gives us an opportunity to rejig the layout. We want more of our Local Studies books to be available on open access, and to create a space in which everyone feels welcome and empowered to walk in and use our resources," reveals Shropshire Archives' team leader Sarah Davis.

One local history source that you can explore right now is a beautifully illustrated manuscript called *Adventures of a Tramp and a Philosopher* (reference 9786/1). This was an illustrated diary kept by a man (the 'Tramp') and his nephew (the 'Philosopher') as they travelled from Malvern across Herefordshire to Ludlow, then through Shropshire to Crewe in 1867. As a blog on the archive's website explains, "It offers us a fascinating insight into the adventures of two Victorian gentleman as they comment on what they see, the characters they meet along the way and their experience of travelling on foot." For more, see **shropshirearchives.org.uk/blog/adventures-of-a-tramp-and-a-philosopher-part-1/**.

LOCAL INDUSTRY

GKN Sankey Did your Shropshire relation work for this major employer?

This advert for Sankey's domestic metalware dates from 1913

One of Shropshire Archives' largest collections of business records relates to engineering company GKN Sankey (**shropshirearchives.org.uk/collections/getrecord/CCA_X4898**). Joseph Sankey founded the business in Bilston in 1854, the Hadley Castle Works at Telford was established in 1910, and the firm eventually merged with industrial giant Guest, Keen and Nettlefold. You can find out more about the history of the parent company, and allied collections at Wolverhampton City Archives, via The National Archives' online catalogue Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**): **tinyurl.com/disco-sank**.

Shropshire Surnames

Are any of these in your family tree?

BOWDLER

This surname is possibly derived from buddle, meaning 'to wash ore' in the local dialect.

DOODY

This nickname might have come from the Middle English word *dod*, meaning someone who was lumpish, thickset or stupid.

GARBETT

The family name Garbett is particularly associated with Shropshire, but also extremely common in Staffordshire and Worcestershire.

GITTINS

More than 400 Gittins were found to be living in Shropshire when the 1881 census was enumerated on Sunday 3 April.

MINTON

The origins of this habitational name lie in Little Stretton. The word comes from the Welsh *mynydd*, meaning mountain or hill, and the Old English *tun* meaning settlement or town.

PITCHFORD

Pitchford is another local locative name, and a variant of the surname Pickford.

PURSLOW

Approximately one third of all of the people sharing this surname who were recorded in the 1891 census were living in Shropshire.

YAPP

This nickname derives from the Middle English word *yap*, meaning clever, cunning or devious.

GETTY IMAGES / GRACE'S GUIDE

DIRECTORY

ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES

Shropshire Archives
a **Castle Gates, Shrewsbury SY1 2AQ**
t 0345 678 9096
e *archives@shropshire.gov.uk*
w **shropshirearchives.org.uk**
Here you'll find material for the historic county, including the Borough of Telford and Wrekin. Among the holdings are parish registers, workhouse records, electoral registers and poll books, cemetery and court records, while many indexes and images are available via the online catalogue. In May staff are celebrating crime-and-punishment records with a number of events.

Bridgnorth Library
a **Listley Street, Bridgnorth WV16 4AW**
t 01746 763358
e *bridgnorth.library@shropshire.gov.uk*
w **shropshire.gov.uk/libraries/find-a-library/bridgnorth-library**
The library looks after the Bridgnorth Historical Collection, and offers free access to Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**) and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) like every library in the county.

Herefordshire Archive And Records Centre
a **Fir Tree Lane, Rotherwas, Hereford HR2 6LA**
t 01432 260750
e *archives@herefordshire.gov.uk*
w **tinyurl.com/herefordshire-arc**
The Diocese of Hereford covers some 356 parishes including some in southern Shropshire.

Ludlow Library
a **7 Parkway, Ludlow SY8 2PG**
t 01743 250510
e *ludlow.library@shropshire.gov.uk*
w **shropshire.gov.uk/libraries/find-a-library/ludlow-library**
If you're interested in Ludlow, also try the Friends of Ludlow Museum and its research arm the Ludlow Historical Research Group (**friends-of-ludlow-museum.com**). The latter's website Ludlow Soldiers (**ludlowsoldiersww1.co.uk**) has material on local men who served in the First World War.

National Library Of Wales
a **Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 3BU**
t 01970 632800
e *gofyn@library.wales*
w **library.wales**
The St Asaph Diocese collection covers the north-west parishes of Shropshire around Oswestry, and has Bishops' Transcripts and marriage bonds.

Oswestry Archives
a **Oswestry Town Council, The Guildhall, Oswestry SY11 1PZ**
t 01691 680222
e *enquiries@oswestry-tc.gov.uk*
w **oswestry-tc.gov.uk/community/heritage-history/oswestry-archives**
The website has a guide to sources here, at Shropshire Archives and at Oswestry Library.

Staffordshire History Centre
a **Eastgate Street, Stafford ST16 2LZ**
t 01785 278379
e *staffordshire.record.office@staffordshire.gov.uk*
w **staffordshire.gov.uk/Heritage-and-archives/homepage.aspx**
The redeveloped Staffordshire Record Office and William Salt Library is due to open this autumn (**staffordshirehistorycentre.blog**). It holds records of the Lichfield Diocese, covering the northern half of Shropshire.

Whitchurch Heritage Centre
a **12 St Mary's Street, Whitchurch SY13 1QY**
t 01948 664577
e *info@whitchurch-heritage.co.uk*
w **www.whitchurch-heritage.co.uk**
The centre tells the story of Whitchurch and local villages.

GROUPS & SOCIETIES

Friends Of Shropshire Archives
w **friendsofshropshirearchives.org**
Members support the archive, including raising funds.

Oswestry Family & Local History Group
w **oswestrygenealogy.org.uk**
The group runs a regular support service at Oswestry Library.

Shropshire Family History Society
w **sfhs.org.uk**
The SFHS website lists parishes, churches, dioceses and districts.

MUSEUMS

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
a **Library & Archives, Coach Road, Coalbrookdale, Telford TF8 7DQ**
t 01952 435900
e *collections@ironbridge.org.uk*
w **www.ironbridge.org.uk/learn/museum-collections/**
The trust looks after more than 400,000 objects and archives across multiple museums.

Shropshire Museums' Collections Centre
a **7–9 Parkway, Ludlow SY8 2PG**
t 01743 250505
e *SMCC@shropshire.gov.uk*
w **tinyurl.com/shropshire-mcc**
Read about the collections at Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery, Shrewsbury Castle and Much Wenlock Museum.

Soldiers Of Shropshire Museum
a **Castle Court, Castle Street, Shrewsbury SY1 2AT**
t 01743 358516
e *info@soldiersofshropshire.co.uk*
w **tinyurl.com/soldiers-shropshire**
The website includes finding aids.

WEBSITES

Ancestry
w **bit.ly/anc-shrops**
Ancestry has parish registers for Shropshire, as well as for Staffordshire and Worcestershire.

Findmypast
w **bit.ly/fmp-shrops**
The website includes both parish and nonconformist registers.

Visitors' book, 1856–c1902

Kate Hallett from Conwy Archives shares a souvenir of tourism in 19th-century Wales

Interview By Rosemary Collins

During the 19th century, new money for the middle classes and the growth of the railways enabled many of our ancestors to go away on holiday for the first time. With its beautiful setting in Gwydir Forest, the village of Betws-y-Coed in Conwy, North Wales, attracted many holidaymakers, particularly artists. Conwy Archives has a remarkable record of this period – a visitors' book decorated with evocative messages and illustrations. Archives, heritage and records manager Kate Hallett reveals the stories it contains.

Can You Tell Me More About Your Gem?

It's a visitors' book from Llugwy Cottage, Betws-y-Coed. The entries date from 1856 until c1902, although the majority of the messages end in 1877. The book is a relatively new acquisition that arrived with us last October, after the depositor found it among her father's possessions. She first offered it to the National Trust, who luckily passed her on to us.

Why Did You Choose It As Your Gem?

The book itself has some lovely illustrations that were sketched by happy visitors to the cottage. It also provides an insight into Victorian tourism which, although it has some similarities to the 'staycations' that many people take today, was very different in other ways.

For example some visitors to Llugwy Cottage stayed for periods long beyond a minibreak, such as the Cory family who spent six weeks there in 1860.

What Do You Know About The Cottage?

Llugwy Cottage was a boarding house offering full board to its guests. It was managed by a Mrs Elizabeth Hughes and her daughter Katharine, later replaced by a younger daughter Elizabeth, described by one guest as "fair Lizzie". Mrs Hughes ran the business alongside raising a large family. She was the mother of 10 children, four of them born while she was running the boarding house, so the assistance of an older daughter must have been essential. Her husband John worked in a slate quarry but he died in 1872, so the income from the boarding house would have assumed crucial importance for the family at this point.

Trade seems to have been very brisk during 1856–1877 but although the messages tail off, the young Elizabeth inherited the business. She married in 1879, and ran it with her husband until at least the 1890s.

Holiday accommodation of this kind would have been very popular

Holiday accommodation of this kind would have been very popular in this part of North Wales and especially Betws-y-Coed, because the area had established a reputation as an artists' colony in the earlier part of the 19th century – many based themselves here in order to find kindred spirits and paint the spectacular landscapes. The opening of a railway station at Betws-y-Coed in 1868 made the village more accessible to a wider tourist market.

What Sort Of Messages Does The Book Contain?

They're generally complimentary, particularly of the cooking, and quite a few guests were moved to add an illustration too.

Visit Us

Conwy Archives
a Culture Centre, Town Ditch Road, Conwy LL32 8NU
t 01492 577550
e *archifau.archives@conwy.gov.uk*
w **conwyculture.com/visit-culture/conwy-archives**

Conwy Archives' opening hours are Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 9.30am–12.30pm and 1.30pm–4.30pm, and Tuesday 9.30am–12.30pm and 1.30pm–6.45pm.

For example a Mr Charles who stayed in 1859 was so pleased with "the liberal and attentive treatment" he and his wife had received that he drew a 'before and after' picture showing how much weight he had put on after two weeks of good feeding!

Many of the guests were from the south-east of England or the big northern cities, and enjoyed the freedom of walking in Snowdonia. One unidentified father and his daughters ("Papa, Emily and Kate") in 1866 left self-portraits depicting them out walking with the note "Emily and Kate discarded their crinolines (very rude)".

In one case a relatively well-known artist can be identified. John Edward Soden (1836–1897) drew himself carving his name into a tree after a stay in 1859.

Mainly the guests who stayed were solidly Victorian middle class, able to take holidays and to sometimes bring servants with them but not wealthy enough to rent out an entire property for themselves. Where the visitors had distinctive enough names and also provided a home address or area, it is sometimes possible to find them in the census.

For example John B Drayton and family of Chislehurst, Kent, who stayed in 1863 with their children and their nursemaids, can be fairly firmly identified as John Box and Emily Drayton, "foreign merchant" and his wife, who appear in the 1861 census in 3 Church Row, Chislehurst, with a young daughter and various servants, including Sarah Bailey – who was possibly one of the nursemaids at Llugwy Cottage.

In one instance that I could find, a visitor was harbouring an unsavoury back story. Charles Cheveley of Balham, who stayed in the cottage in 1875, is almost certainly the Charles Cheveley (1800–1894) who was awarded compensation in 1833 because he was deprived of 14 enslaved people when slavery was abolished.

What Other Items Are In Your Collection?

Conwy Archive Service is the local authority archive service for Conwy County, and we are based in the lovely Conwy Culture Centre by the ancient town walls.

The researchers who come to visit us are investigating a range of local and house-history topics, as well as their family history of course. The centre is a good base for ancestral tourists, who are looking to not only find out more about their forebears, but then to go out and walk in their footsteps.

Our oldest record is a 1331 charter between Edward III and the merchants of Conwy and our newest records are sometimes digital, including an exhibition in which local schoolchildren recorded their experiences of the Covid-19 lockdown. So we have quite a range of material!

LEGO IDEAS FAMILY TREE

1,040 pieces, £79.99; lego.com

Although many of us played with Lego when we were children, the Danish company has diversified dramatically in recent years and now sells a vast range of sets aimed at adult collectors. One of the major themes is the 'Ideas' line, which takes fans' designs and turns them into retail products. The latest is targeted at family historians: a literal family tree.

Anyone who has ever played with Lego before will feel comfortable as soon as they open the box. The pieces are in numbered bags that correspond to sections in the instructions, and the advice is mostly easy to follow (some of the foliage is difficult to distinguish once you start adding layers to it). Everything fits together easily, although handling the smaller pieces can be a little fiddly.

Once built you are left with an impressive-looking model that's just shy of 12 inches high. The foliage appears convincingly dense, and details such as the kite stuck in the branches and the picnic and easel (with changeable painting) give the scene charm. There are also plenty of extra pieces so you can change the colour of the blossom on the tree to suit your personal preference, or keep your model authentically seasonal.

The final touch is to add your own family photographs, and this is the only aspect of the set that I feel isn't as good as it could be. The 16 clips hold the photos securely and don't feel like they would damage them, but they hang quite loosely on the branches and it takes a fair bit of trial and error to get them sitting nicely.

Also, due to the size of the tree you need to use quite small photos to avoid them completely obscuring the model. Mine measured 2½ inches x 3 inches, and even they looked too big.

If you have small-enough photos and can overlook a couple of other issues then the model looks great, and building it is a fun way to spend an afternoon. The Lego Ideas Family Tree is a lovely set and makes a great centrepiece.

ROBBIE BENNIE is the art editor of *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* and a lifelong fan of Lego

DIGITAL PICKS

Rosemary Collins highlights three digital resources that caught our eye this month

PODCAST

Three Million

tinyurl.com/bbc-3mil

In 1943 at least three million Indian people, who were British subjects, died in the Bengal famine. It was one of the largest losses of civilian life on the Allied side during the Second World War, but the tragedy is not as widely known as it should be. In this five-part BBC podcast, journalist and broadcaster Kavita Puri unearths the eyewitness testimonies that tell the story of the famine.

LISTEN

Family Sayings

tinyurl.com/radio4-wom

In this episode of his long-running Radio 4 series *Word of Mouth*, poet Michael Rosen shares listeners' stories about the words and sayings unique to their families. If you want to find out what "You look sharp as a matzo ball" and "Watch out for the dangaroos" mean, have a listen!

WEBSITE

Natasha Houseman

natashahouseman.co.uk/

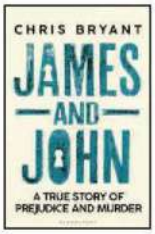
Natasha Houseman began researching her family history four years ago during the Covid-19 lockdowns, and now writes about her relations online. Read her blog for an engaging account of the joys and frustrations that are familiar to all family historians, including trying to trace her 'ag lab' 5x great grandfather, investigating the death of a forebear knocked down by a goods train on his way home from the Post Office, and fond memories of her late grandfather.

James And John A True Story Of Prejudice And Murder

SOCIAL HISTORY

Chris Bryant

Bloomsbury, 320 pages, £25



In 1835, two men waited for their trial in their cell at London's Newgate Prison. Their only crime was that they had sex with each other. They had been arrested after two people had peeped through the keyhole of a rented room where the event took place. Despite supporting character witnesses, they would hang, although the 15 other individuals sentenced to death at this session were reprieved.

MP and historian Chris Bryant does an admirable job examining the case of James Pratt and John Smith, the last two men hanged in England for sodomy. He pieces together their backgrounds, describing the London streets they walked, and the horrors that awaited them.

The average trial lasted no more than eight and a half minutes. Justice under such circumstances was impossible. The judge was brutal, and the men wept openly. The sentence had to go before the king who had to agree to the execution, but this was a mere formality. The pair's tale is only one of many similar cases that came to court.

Family historians will find valuable descriptions of prison life and the court experience that their ancestors may have endured in this highly readable investigation.

Julie Peakman's book *Libertine London: Sex in the Eighteenth-Century Metropolis* is published on 13 May

PARTICULARS OF THE EXECUTION OF
JAMES PRATT & JOHN SMITH,
Who were Executed at the Old Bailey this Morning.
With the Copy of a Letter written by Smith on Wednesday last.

JAMES PRATT, aged 30, and JOHN SMITH, aged 40, were convicted at the last September Sessions, at the Old Bailey, of an unnatural crime, committed in the Borough of Southwark.—Wm. Bonnell, aged 08, was also convicted of aiding in and procuring the commission of the said crime and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation.—The evidence against these wretched men was so conclusive, that not the least shadow of doubt remained of their guilt. On their receiving sentence of Death, the Recorder directed that they should be brought up to receive judgment by themselves, as he felt it to be his duty to separate & distinguish them from the rest of the prisoners who had been called upon to receive the dreadful sentence of the law, because he felt that, however great their crimes might have been, they would have been contaminated by the prisoners' presence. Feeling so satisfied respecting the verdict of the Jury, he could not hold out the least hope of his being of any use to them in the subsequent investigation which their cases would undergo before his Majesty, assisted by his Privy Councillors. He entreated them, therefore, to reflect upon their positions as men on the brink of a period when their lives would, perhaps, close, and when they would be called upon to render an account at a far more awful tribunal than that before which they were called to account by the law. He would not now aggravate their sufferings, but would at once proceed to pass upon them the awful sentence of the law, which was, that they should be taken to the prison from whence they came, and from thence to a place of execution, where they should be hanged by the neck until they could be severally dead.

The prisoners appeared considerably affected during this address, & left the dock in tears.

After condemnation, every exertion was made by the Rev. Clergyman to bring them to a just sense of their awful situation & to acknowledge the justice of their sentence, which they did, devoting most of their time in prayer. On Wednesday Smith sent the following letter, to a friend of his living in the neighbourhood where he resided, and through great interest we have procured a copy, which is as follows:—

A contemporaneous broadside giving the "Particulars of the Execution of James Pratt & John Smith"

Reader Review YOUR CHANCE TO ASSESS THE LATEST BOOKS

Missing Persons, Or My Grandmother's Secrets

IRISH HISTORY

Clair Wills, *Allen Lane, 208 pages, £20*

Clair Wills is the regius professor of English Literature at the University of Cambridge, and a cultural historian with several books relating to Ireland to her name. Wills' most recent offering is *Missing Persons, or My Grandmother's Secrets*, recently published by Allen Lane.

The book looks at the very emotive subject of mother and baby homes during 1950s Ireland, and this is very much a personal story. Wills focuses on an unknown cousin, who had been written out of her family history.

The book opens with a cast of the characters from her family, beginning with her grandmother Molly, born in 1891, the author's grandfather and then the siblings of her grandparents, before following the generations to include her parents, siblings and offspring.

A townland map is included before moving to the main text across seven chapters. There are some images, all of which are in atmospheric black and white.

Understanding the abandonment of mothers and children is just as important as the reclaiming of our relatives. A sombre topic, and recommended reading.

Julie Goucher, Chilton, County Durham
Julie has been researching her tree since 1988 and is a Pharos Tutor (tinyurl.com/pharos-jg)

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e *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL LIBRARY/HARVARD UNIVERSITY

TV & RADIO

Jonathan Wright previews upcoming programmes on history and family history

Rob And Rylan's Grand Tour

BBC Two and BBC iPlayer
Early May

Barrister, presenter and former *WDYTYA?* star Rob Rinder is fascinated by art and culture. DJ and presenter Rylan adores architecture. Both share a love of the finer things in life. Accordingly, when *Rob and Rylan's Grand Tour* was first announced last year, it did seem like a marriage made in heaven – although not a real marriage, as the minor furore over Rob jokingly revealing their 'engagement' via social media last summer proved.

Back in the real world, the duo's new series finds them travelling to Italy in the footsteps of those British aristocrats who, in the 18th and 19th centuries, embarked on the so-called Grand Tour. For those lucky enough to be able to afford it, this was the original gap year, a chance to explore the cultural treasures of the Continent. And, of course, to have some fun, and escape the stuffy confines of life in Britain.

One of those who undertook a Grand Tour was Lord Byron who, aged just 36, died 200 years ago. Rob and Rylan draw on his letters and poems as they travel, as well as the diaries of other Britons who visited Italy.

Rylan *(left)* and Rob Rinder in front of the Grand Canal in Venice during the first episode of the series

Each of the three episodes is set in a different city. First up, the duo visit Venice where, as well as learning about Venetian painters and the mechanics of glass-blowing, they discover how gay men in the 18th century found freedom during the city's annual carnival. In Florence, the focus is on the Renaissance. According to the BBC, the "chiselled abs" of Michelangelo's *David* will feature. In Rome, Rob and Rylan visit the city's extraordinary classical ruins.

Throughout, we're promised insights into life as a Grand Tourist as Rob and Rylan, for example, dress up as *macaronis*. This was a pejorative nickname for British men, the precursors to Regency-era dandies, whose fashion sense was influenced by the more flamboyant end of the Italian wardrobe.

Great Coastal Railway Journeys

BBC Two and BBC iPlayer
April

Taking the Eurostar under the English Channel is a discombobulating experience. Daylight disappears and then, a few minutes later, you find yourself in another country. But not for Michael Portillo, who gets to travel in the cab and see the tunnel unfolding ahead of him.

It's just one of the highlights as the former politician once again takes to the rails to explore the shores of the UK and, in this case, France, where he visits Pas-de-Calais. Back in Blighty, Michael also sees Kent's historic coastlines, Tresco Abbey on the Isles of Scilly and Lyme Regis in west Dorset, a town that is long associated with fossil-collecting. A recurring theme of this returning series is the different ways in which coastal communities have deep, enduring connections to the ever-restless sea.

Key To A Fortune

Channel 4 and streaming
Concludes Sunday 28 April

Every year, vacant homes worth millions of pounds sit unclaimed by those who, unknown to them, are entitled to inherit the estates of distant relatives who died without making a will. But what happens when such lucky beneficiaries have to decide whether to keep a property they likely never knew existed?

This scenario is the focus of a new series presented by *A Place in the Sun* veteran Jean Johansson. In the first episode, for example, Storme discovers that she's the sole heir to a cottage in Kent. It could be a chocolate-box 'forever home', but it needs money spent on it. Will Storme tackle a major renovation job, or will she sell up? A similar dilemma faces siblings Pam and Lawrence from Durham in the second episode, when they learn that they're two of the heirs to an 18th-century Welsh farmhouse.

Throughout the series the participants learn about the lives of the properties' original owners. We also meet the genealogists who uncovered their connections in the first place, including the team at Anglia Research.

Archive On 4: DNA, Crime And Controversy

BBC Radio 4 and BBC Sounds
Saturday 4 May

The idea of using DNA testing in family history is increasingly common. But how did we get here? An important step was the introduction of DNA profiling in the criminal-justice system in the 1980s. Here barrister and former MP Anna Soubry revisits the story, focusing on the breakthrough that allowed DNA evidence to be used – and sometimes misused – in trials.

Bridgerton

Netflix
Thursday 16 May

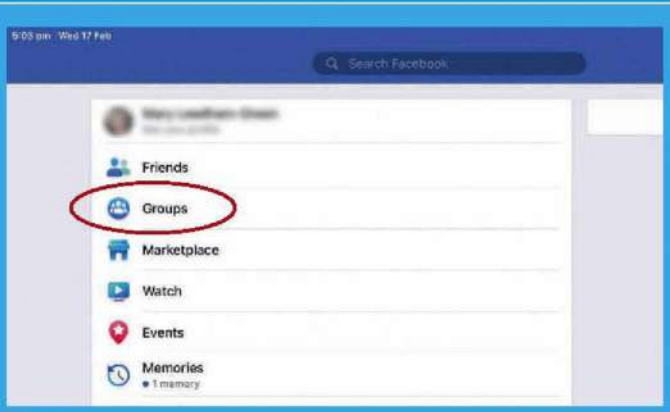
The brilliantly skewed take on high-society life in the Regency era is back for a third series. This time, the focus is on Penelope Featherington (Nicola Coughlan) and Colin Bridgerton (Luke Newton). The will-they-won't-they set-up is that Penelope, AKA gossip columnist Lady Whistledown, has given up hope of landing Colin. Instead, she decides to take a husband. However, she's lacking in confidence, so things don't go well. At which point Colin, lately returned from his summer travels, offers to mentor her…

BBC/REX TV/ZINC/LANA SALAH

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?®

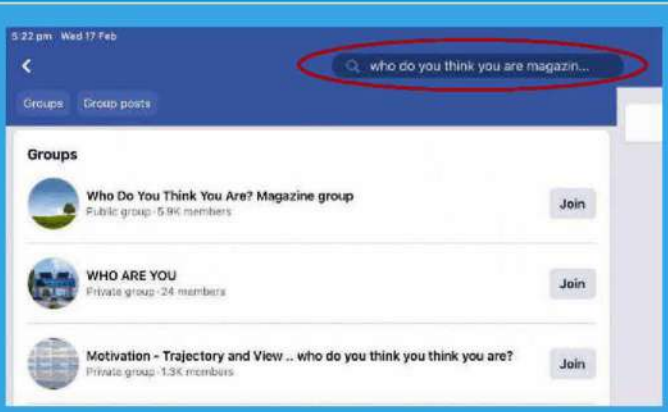
Join Our FACEBOOK GROUP

Did you know that we have a friendly Facebook Group where family historians can share new discoveries, ask for help or just chat about genealogy? If you haven't joined a Facebook Group before, don't worry, it's very simple!



1 Click On The 'Groups' Icon

From the Facebook homepage, click on the 'Groups' icon (this may be at the bottom of the screen on the mobile app or from the menu, or above your News Feed).



2 Search For Our Group

Search for the *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* Group (click the magnifying glass), then click 'Join' next to the name. You will need to read and agree to our rules.

3 Wait To Be Added

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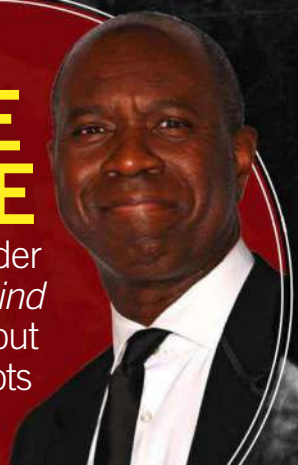

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'Kazimierz Won A Medal For Gallantry'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

Prolific author Douglas Jackson is inspired by his Polish uncle, who during the Second World War rescued his comrades from a German ambush. By **Gail Dixon**

Douglas' uncle Kazimierz Gardziel

Douglas Jackson grew up in Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders, and has fond memories of exploring with his uncle Kazimierz Gardziel. "We would go on long treks across the hills to remote lochs, and fish for trout," Douglas explains. Despite their close relationship, Kazimierz never told Douglas about his wartime service, or the act of bravery that earned him Poland's highest military honour.

Kazimierz was born on 12 October 1922, in Pruchnik, south-east Poland. His parents Jacob and Cecilie later moved the family to Paris then Troyes in north-east France.

How did a young Pole come to live in Jedburgh? Douglas believes that he joined the Polish 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade, 10th Dragoons Regiment, which fought in Burgundy not far from Troyes. The brigade was evacuated to Britain in 1940 after the fall of France.

"The 10th Dragoons were stationed around Galashiels in the Borders where they became part of the Polish 1st Armoured Division. Kazimierz was most likely based in Kelso or Jedburgh, which is where he met my aunt Margaret Gordon. They married in 1945, and had four children.

"My cousin Elizabeth Bridge in Australia sent me a picture of Kazimierz at a medal ceremony. I was in touch with a group on Facebook dedicated to the Polish 1st Armoured Division (**tinyurl.com/fb-polish-ad**). They confirmed that the medal was the Silver Cross of the War Order of Virtuti Militari, which is equivalent to our Victoria Cross."

Naturally Douglas was keen to discover what his uncle had done to garner such an honour.

"The Facebook group provided details of his military service, then I tracked down a description of the incident in a PhD thesis."

Kazimierz located the trapped men and led them to safety

The Polish 1st Armoured Division was part of the Allied invasion of 1944. Kazimierz was a corporal and a motorcyclist with the reconnaissance platoon of the 10th Dragoons' 2nd Squadron.

The platoon was serving at Terover, near Alphen in South Holland, on 5–6 October. Three Polish tanks had been ambushed by seven German *Sturmgeschütz* ('assault gun') armoured fighting vehicles, and the soldiers inside them were trapped.

Kazimierz set off on his motorcycle to reconnoitre the position – a dangerous mission in itself. He reported the situation to his commanding officer and volunteered to lead an attack on the enemy vehicles, two of which were knocked out. Despite being wounded in the hip, Kazimierz located the trapped men and led them to safety under enemy fire.

"I felt very proud of my uncle's bravery. He was always a special guy, but knowing of his achievement brought home how courageous he'd been."

After the war ended, Kazimierz returned to Jedburgh and received his medal at a ceremony held in the Borders. The event was covered in the local press.

Kazimierz became a lorry driver before moving to Rugby in Warwickshire and working in a car factory. "He loved the Borders, and was a regular and very welcome visitor to Jedburgh even after his divorce from my aunt. I remember him as always being cheerful. He passed away in 1977 while living in Rugby.

"I set my latest novel *Blood Roses* in occupied Poland as a tribute to him. The main character is a Polish detective forced to live a double life as a resistance agent and a collaborator. Physically, he resembles my uncle, and his resistance handler shares his name. Writing the book has made me feel closer to Kazimierz. I now have a much better understanding of Polish people and what they went through during the war."

DOUGLAS JACKSON
lives in Stirling, Scotland, and is the author of 17 historical novels and mystery thrillers

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